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MARION LESLIE.

MARION LESLIE:

A STORY.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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CHAPTER I.

On a projecting point, on the east coast of Scotland, washed on three sides by the waves of the German Ocean, stands the ancient town of Islayhead. It is divided into two parts by the harbour, and the inhabitants are saved from the fate of "Britannos toto orbe divisos" by a drawbridge, which admits the passage of ships of considerable burden, and serves to keep up the communication between the islanders and their townsmen on the mainland. In the island, overlooking the sea may be seen the ruins of an ancient castle, once the property of a noble family, which in the days of its prosperity did much to promote the cause of learning and civilization in this remote

part of the world, and could boast of at least one hero among its younger sons, who fought and bled on the battle-fields of Germany, whose name is still known in the annals of fame. This is the only relic of a by-gone age to be seen in a town which, though of considerable antiquity, is devoid of all interesting historical associations, and owes its present prosperity to its devotion to a particular branch of commerce, for the prosecution of which its position affords many facilities. But while the antiquary would hurry past it as unworthy of his notice, and the man of refinement would tarry as brief a time as needs be in a place where violence is done to more senses than one, the town of Islayhead would not be without interest to those who delight to study the manners and customs of a rude and primitive race.

Stretching along the coast to the north of the town, often so close to the water's edge, that in a heavy gale the sea spray dashes over their roofs, may be seen the fishermen's huts, huddled together without any fixed plan, as if each had erected his habitation on the spot

that pleased his fancy, without regard to the rights of the proprietor of the soil, or the convenience of his neighbours. There is no attempt at comfort or elegance, or even cleanliness. Each cottage consists of two rooms, (a *but* and a *ben*), which are used, when occasion requires, as kitchen, parlour, bed-room, and work-shop; for in one of them, during part of the day, the female members of the household occupy themselves in mending the nets, or eviscerating the fish which their husbands or brothers have just landed. Strong, powerful women these, worthy mates of the descendants of the old Norsemen, with physical frames little inferior in strength to those of the other sex—faces tanned by exposure to storm and sunshine, and hands so hard and horny that their touch has something of the rough consistency of the granite with which their coast abounds. Their share in the division of labour is as onerous as that of their husbands. Not only have they to assist in landing the fish, and preparing them for the market, but when they are sufficiently dried, and have received that

peculiar flavour which has made them celebrated even in the London market, the hardy fish-wives issue forth with their *creels* upon their backs, and dispose of the proceeds of their husbands' labour among the inhabitants of the surrounding country. It is not unusual for one of them to walk from thirty to forty miles a day, with her loaded *creel* upon her back half the distance; and though this mode of life serves to strengthen their physical frames, it is at the expense of all that softness and delicacy of outline which we love to associate with the female figure. If a painter wished to paint a Venus Erycina, he would scarcely choose the fairest of the fishwives of Islayhead as his model.

About two miles to the south of Islayhead, in a hollow formed by the bed of a rivulet which there enters the German Ocean, stands the fishing village of Loanhead. It consists of some forty houses, with a population of about two hundred souls, all connected more or less by ties of affinity, and depending for their subsistence on the fickle element, with which they are

more familiar than with the land. All their earliest associations are connected with the sea. The hollow contracts behind the hamlet, so as to form a sort of irregular triangle, and on three sides the inhabitants of Loanhead are shut out, as it were, from the rest of the world, and obliged to look seaward. The playground of the children is the small sandy beach which intervenes between the hamlet and the sea, and there is not an object animate or inanimate to be found within their limited field of observation with which they are not perfectly familiar. They do not know the names which science has bestowed upon the shells that are scattered along the beach, or the plants that cling to the rocks, or the fishes against which they wage war almost from their earliest infancy, but they have a vocabulary of their own, and many a naturalist might add to his knowledge by placing himself under the guidance of the ragged urchins who may be seen, in fine weather or foul, disporting themselves on the beach at Loanhead.

On the evening of a hot July day, an

unusual excitement was perceptible among the fishermen of Loanhead. The sun had already disappeared behind the horizon, but there was still sufficient light to enable the fishermen to watch the movements of a vessel which had just appeared in the bay, and which was supposed to be one of the ships engaged in the whale fishery. The arrival of one of these ships is always attended with much anxiety. Most of the fishermen engage in this perilous trade in the early part of their lives, and when a ship returns the friends and relatives of the seamen hurry on board to obtain intelligence. Harrowing scenes are often witnessed on such occasions,—scenes of mingled joy and sorrow. The mother gives a rude but hearty welcome to the son who is restored to his home, or turns away with a silent grief which everyone respects, when she learns that some vivacious whale has shivered the boat on which he had embarked, or that he has succumbed beneath the hardships of an arctic winter. But whatever be the intelligence—life or death, joy or sorrow—the duties of everyday life

are never neglected; there is no weak indulgence in the luxury of woe. Life with them is truly a struggle—a battle with a treacherous foe, which, if he spare them one day, may sweep them away the next; and this may perhaps explain why a safe return causes no inordinate joy, and a reported death is borne with a magnanimity which has nothing in it of indifference. These hardy sons of toil are destined for the sea, not only as their field of labour, but also as their place of final repose. Enter their huts, and you will find in almost every one of them a widow who laments a husband, or a mother who tells of sons who put to sea in their frail boats, were overtaken by a sudden gale, and never returned. All this is told, it may be at times with a sigh, but always with quiet resignation. There is no angry outcry against fate, or Providence, such as the heroes of romance indulge in; when the young fisherwoman swears fealty to her husband, she knows that the sea is her great rival, who, in a fit of mad jealousy, may some day drag him from her arms; and when that day comes she is

already prepared for it, and bears it as best she may.

The evening of this July day was not without its beauty, even on this rugged coast. A bright orange tint extended between the sea and the upper part of the horizon, which was encircled with a girdle of dark grey clouds. A strong breeze was blowing in the direction of the land, and clouds of spray, like the thin transparency of a bridal veil, rose from the rocky islet in the bay, against which the waves broke with a sullen roar. The sweep of the waves over the pebbly shore was accompanied with a sound like the rattling of iron chains, and at times the foam fell at the feet of the fishermen who stood watching the ship, which was beating off and on in the bay.

A group of them had gathered round John Kynoch, or Stormy Jack as he was called, from his boldness in venturing to sea in all weathers—a tall, muscular man, dressed like the other fishermen, in a long red cap, a coarse blue shirt, and loose canvas trowsers—who was watching the ship with some anxiety depicted on his face.

By his side stood his brother-in-law, Adam Mackie, the wealthy miller — for Stormy Jack had departed from the usual custom of his class, and had wedded, in early life, the daughter of a farmer, superior to himself in rank and wealth. A greater contrast than that presented by these two men could not well be conceived. The features of the fisherman, though tanned till they looked as if they had been cut out of a weather-beaten block of granite, had something in them so manly, bold and frank, that you could not speak to him, or look at the good-natured smile which lighted up his face, without feeling that Stormy Jack was to be trusted and loved; and the recital of his deeds of daring in saving the lives of others, repeated by the lips of his admiring companions, never failed to excite the respect of the strangers who visited this part of the coast.

His inexhaustible strength, and great skill in swimming, had repeatedly enabled him to reach the shore when his boat was swamped and all his companions perished, and to save the lives of others when no boat could put to sea, and no one dared to swim to

their assistance. The tendency to hero-worship, which, we are told, is inherent to our nature, could not have found a more appropriate object at Loanhead; and accordingly the fishermen were proud of their stalwart comrade, and looked up to him, and did him reverence in their own rough way. The boys and girls, that looked like little marine monsters, as they rolled and played in the happy exuberance of childhood on the sandy beach, had confidence in Jack, and placed their tiny hands in his gigantic palm as they asked him to take them out in his boat, or watched his return, ever joyous and buoyant, and often with some strange shells entangled in the nets, to amuse his young friends.

The miller, on the other hand, was a small, lean, wrinkled, elderly man, with a stooping figure, and ferret-like eyes, which were never at rest, and seemed stealthily to watch everything in their neighbourhood, as if expecting a sudden surprise or immediate attack. A few grizzled locks stole out from beneath the broad-brimmed hat which he wore, and which popu-

lar fame affirmed that he had stolen from some unprotected scarecrow. His brow was low and wrinkled, his eyebrows grey and bushy, his nose thin and prominent, but descending at the point, as if to embrace his chin, which, nothing loth, rose half-way to meet it. The yellow skin of his face was loose and baggy, as if he had borrowed it from a larger party, and crumpled into countless wrinkles, like the outward coating of an Egyptian mummy. His whole appearance produced the impression of one who was in the last stage of atrophy, and who was melting away visibly. His attenuated frame was encased in a suit which had once been black, but which had seen so much service that it could not now be said to be of any particular colour. At a first glance he might have been mistaken for a mendicant, and, indeed, at times he had accepted the alms which strangers, pitying his apparent misery, had proffered to him, for he had no false pride; but a closer examination would have detected in that restless eye and puckered face a proud consciousness of power, which amounted almost to dignity.

And Mackie the miller *had* power—not the power of superior strength or daring, like that of the hardy fisherman by his side, but the power that springs from the possession of wealth, and the subjection of others, whose necessities have led them to submit to the golden yoke. Mackie was a usurer; and a class habitually improvident felt the necessity of treating him with respect, as they knew not how soon they might require his assistance. This outward respect was all that he cared for, as he cynically discarded all ideas of personal merit ever being appreciated in this world, and held that money was the secret of power, and that mere power, whether exercised for good or evil, was sure to command at least the outward semblance of respect.

The vessel was evidently approaching the land, though the state of the tide was such as to render it impossible for her, at that hour, to enter the harbour of Islayhead.

"Surely," said one of the fishermen, "that cannot be the 'Arctic;' the captain knows the coast, and how dangerous it is to approach it."

"It is the 'Arctic,'" said Stormy Jack. "You know our Ninian is on board, and when she left I looked at her as if it might have been for the last time. I know every rope in her rigging, and every plank from stem to stern. The captain has come as near the shore as he can with safety, to let the people know who it is. He will cast anchor in the bay, and will make the harbour to-morrow, when it is high water."

"Better keep well out to sea. The wind is blowing hard against the shore, and the sooner the captain says 'about ship,' the better for all on board."

"They are not much more than a mile from the shore," said another fisherman. "The bottom is rocky there, and no anchor would hold."

"You are right," said the miller. "It was near that spot that the 'Oscar' was lost and all on board. She threw out her anchor, but it was like trying to bind that big beast Leviathan with a *worset* thread from an auld wife's shank—all went down, the ship was torn to pieces on the jagged points of

the rocks, and the wreck strewed the shore next morning.

"Ay, ay. That is true," said one of the fishermen. "But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. You got as much wood as roofed your byre, muller, and I am thinking the owners did not pocket many of your bawbees."

To this home-thrust the miller vouchsafed no answer; but he took a note of it, and inscribed on the tablet of his memory the stern resolution that, the next time that unfortunate fisherman applied for the loan of money, he should pay cent. per cent.

"They begin to see their danger, for they have put the ship about, and are retiring from the land. Did you see anything fall from the ship? It strikes me that some dark object was floating on the surface of the water. It seemed at first to be a man, but if he had fallen overboard some effort would have been made to save him. No one could ever reach the land in such a sea as this"

"It *is* a man," said another of the fishermen. "Bend down till your eye is on a

level with that stripe of orange which bounds the horizon, and you will see his head, at times, rising above the waves."

"I can see him at times distinctly. He is making for the land, but the tide is right against him. He will require all his strength and skill to reach the land. I had rather swim six miles with the tide in my favour, than one mile in such a sea."

All the fishermen were now bending down, and looking steadily out to sea. Night was already beginning to set in, and it was only by keeping the eye on a level with the surface of the waves that they could perceive at times the outline of a human head on the horizon, the orange tinge of which was gradually being overspread by a darker hue. There was an expression of anxiety and sympathy on their rough but kindly features. They felt that to reach the land in such a sea, and on such a shore, would task the skill of the best of swimmers; and they could render no assistance. Their boats were unavailable; they were drawn upon the sand at the distance of about two hundred yards from

the sea; and, even if they had succeeded in launching one of them, it was doubtful whether they could have reached the shore again without some accident. Moreover, they were spell-bound as it were, by that powerful interest which is ever felt in the sight of a man struggling with the elements, when the want of success must be attended with the forfeit of his life.

Sometimes the swimmer seemed to be gaining the mastery over the waves; they could see him rising at times on their crested heads, like a black speck, and then diving like a gull, as one of more than ordinary size threatened to carry him out to sea. More than once he had been borne on the summit of a wave so close to the shore that they could almost discern his features. The wave broke on the sandy beach with a loud roar, and the water came rushing on, with a hissing sound, to the spot where the fishermen stood. But the swimmer had been left behind. Wave after wave had struck him as he neared the shore, and the vantage-ground which he had gained in a quarter of an hour over his deceitful foe

was lost in a few minutes. Still, he never lost heart, and, though he met with many a rebuff, he perceptibly gained ground. They could see him at times dashing aside his long hair from before his face, as he rose above the surface of the waves—a sure proof that he had not lost his presence of mind, and was perfectly at home in the watery element. At length one mighty wave bore him to the beach: they could see the stranger striving to clutch the sand, and to resist the force of the retreating wave. In vain. He was sucked back into the boiling abyss, and borne out some distance before the succeeding wave overtook him.

At this sight a cry of joyful recognition, mixed with terror, burst from the lips of Stormy Jack.

"Oh! God of Heaven, have mercy on him! It is my Ninian, my own boy!—drowning before my eyes, with none to help! Here, lads, quick!—lend a hand, and form a chain. I will catch him the next time he touches the shore."

In a minute the fishermen stood hand-in-hand, forming a sort of living chain, of which Stormy Jack formed the link nearest the sea.

Again the youth dashed aside his long hair, and there was a smile of recognition on his face, as he was borne rapidly to the spot where his father stood. Jack's mighty hand closed upon his arm with a grasp like iron. The sea did not give up its expected victim without a last effort. The jerk was felt along the whole chain; but it did not yield—and a handsome youth, of some eighteen years of age, stood in the midst of the fishermen. His long dark hair hung in ringlets over his shoulders, and was still dripping with the brine, which flowed in streamlets over his naked shoulders. His dark eyes flashed with joy as he looked in the face of Stormy Jack, whose muscular fingers had not yet relaxed their hold, as if he feared that something might still deprive him of his boy. His face was still flushed with the excitement of the recent struggle, and the linen trowsers—the only clothing which he wore—did little to conceal the

symmetrical outlines of a form which gave promise of great strength and beauty.

To the eager inquiries of his father, he proceeded to reply that the "Arctic" having reached the bay, he was unwilling to remain there till the following day without seeing his friends, and, after mentioning his intention to one of his ship-fellows, quietly dropped overboard and made for the land—with what success we have already seen.

CHAPTER II.

Leaving Stormy Jack and his son on their way to the cottage of the former, let us conduct the reader to the manse of Islay-head. In many minds the word manse never fails to excite the most tender associations. Many who occupy the highest place on the bench, at the bar, and in the army, first saw the light of day in a Scottish manse, and owe their future eminence to the training which they received in their early home. In the crowded streets of our great cities, on the burning plains of Hindostan, in our remotest colonies, there are men of all professions, for whom the word manse has a magic charm, melting the icy covering of indifference with which long years of intercourse with the world have incrusted the heart, and reviving the remembrance of the scenes amid which their early youth was spent—of the simple but happy home which they shared with

brothers now doing their part in the battle of life in every part of the globe—and of parents who have gone the way of all living, but who still live in the memories of their grateful offspring, and of those who profited by their labours.

The manse of Islayhead stands upon an eminence which overlooks the town, and commands a view of the whole bay. It belongs to no particular school of architecture, and seems to have been built after no fixed plan. The original building had consisted of two stories; but some of the occupants having, as they informed their heritors, been blessed with vines of unusual fruitfulness, without sufficient space for the young shoots, had persuaded these gentlemen, who are often proof against all the arguments of the cloth, when the point at issue is the augmentation of stipend or expenditure on repairs, to enlarge it by the addition of small wings, erected more with an eye to convenience than artistic effect, the very sight of which would have caused a torrent of moral indignation to flow from the lips of Mr. Ruskin. But art

is not much studied in the northern parts of this kingdom by any part of the community, and happy families had lived comfortably in this old weather-beaten manse, untroubled by the thought that its unartistic angularities would be an eyesore to every man of taste, and comforted by the undeniable fact that it was the best house in the parish except the laird's.

It was surrounded on three sides by an extensive garden, imperfectly sheltered by a few stunted trees; and on the fourth by the wall of the church-yard, where the ashes of those whom the sea had spared, reposed in close proximity to the element on which most of them had toiled. The belfry of a chapel, which had been destroyed at the Reformation, stood in the centre of the church-yard, like a solitary sentinel, watching, with cynical indifference, the changes of three successive centuries, and holding his own against all comers.

The view to landward was as dreary as well can be. The surface of the country was perfectly flat and unwooded, presenting a succession of fields of a whitish-grey

colour, with nothing to arrest the eye or excite the fancy. The appearance of the ocean was far more attractive than that of the land. The ocean is never altogether the same—the observant eye can detect changes in its appearance every day; but whether it lashes itself into a fury, and threatens all around or upon it with destruction, or lies in hushed repose, as if watching for another Cytherea to emerge from its bosom, there is a certain something in the ocean which speaks to the heart, and leads us away from ourselves, borne on the wings of the imagination to distant lands or future ages.

That strange, rambling, old manse, whose passages have once rung with the voices of happy childhood, is now inhabited by one lonely occupant. For twelve years Cosmo Hamilton has dwelt there alone, in the midst of his flock, seeking no other society than that of the rude but honest mariners among whom he labours. A native of the south of Scotland, he has no kindred in the neighbourhood, with claims upon his time or attentions; and while respected by his

brethren of the Presbytery, as a hard-working minister, they feel that, while ever ready to observe the rights of hospitality, he has no desire to mingle largely in their society. At first ministers' wives with marriageable daughters felt a peculiar interest in the new minister of Islayhead, and frequent were the invitations he received, and warm the eulogies pronounced on their fair offspring, who were a sort of walking representatives of all the cardinal virtues; but when it was found that all their overtures, as their husbands phrased it, were rejected, or rather attracted no attention, the unappreciating incumbent of Islayhead was given up as an incorrigible bachelor, and allowed to pursue his own path in peace.

And thus he was able to devote all his time to the half-civilized race among whom he lived. His time, his talents, and his money were all at their service. He expended more than his stipend among the widows and orphans whose husbands or fathers perished at sea; he not only relieved their bodily wants, but he strove to

find an entrance into their souls for the great and solemn truths of religion, and to direct their attention to Him who has a heart to sympathize with human suffering, and who alone can pour the balm of consolation on the wounded heart.

Often his spirit almost sank within him at the opposition he encountered from those he intended to benefit, but he knew the secret source from which strength is to be derived, and laboured as one who felt that great and solemn issues were dependent on his labours. All his sympathies and affections were expended on his flock, and he seemed to have only one object in life—to act toward them the part of a good and faithful pastor. His predecessor, who had lived to a period far beyond the threescore years and ten, had done nothing in his youth, and was unable to do anything in his old age, to promote the spiritual welfare of his people; and when Mr. Hamilton entered on his charge, he found himself surrounded by a mass of practical heathenism, so solid and so compact that the stoutest heart might have turned aside in

despair. But despair is not a Christian word; it had no place in his vocabulary, and he began to preach the word, in season and out of season, with all the earnestness of a dying man speaking to dying men.

All seemed to be in vain; the rough sailors and fishermen kept aloof from him, as a setter forth of strange doctrines; till at length an event happened which gave him, as one of them expressed it, a "grip" over their hearts, which nothing else, perhaps, could have bestowed. Returning home one stormy, moon-lit night from a visit to a sick parishioner, he observed a crowd of fishermen watching some object at sea.

On approaching them, he found that a boat had been overturned near the mouth of the harbour, and they were watching the struggles of the two boatmen who were clinging to it. Each successive wave that swept over them weakened their strength, and it was evident that, unless they were speedily relieved, all was lost.

As the minister approached, a woman's shriek rose from the crowd—

"Oh, my God! it is my ain Willie

drownin' afore my een, and wull nane o' ye help?"

Several boats were lying close to the beach, which a few stalwart arms could launch in a moment. The minister stepped forward, laid his hand on one of the boats, and said:—

"My lads, you are not all that I would wish you to be, but surely you are not cowards; I for one am ready to help these poor men—will none of you go with me?"

There was a murmur among the crowd that no boat could live in such a sea, when a tall, powerful fisherman, who had just come up, exclaimed:—

"What, lads! wad ye lat the minister shame ye? I go for one."

"And I!—and I!" exclaimed successive voices from the crowd. The boat was launched, and a crew readily found.

The minister seized the helm, and steered with a steady hand to the drowning men, who could not hold out much longer. For a time it was doubtful whether the boat could reach the land; the hopes and fears of the crowd rose and fell as it rose and

disappeared with each successive wave; but at length one powerful stroke from the sturdy arms of Stormy Jack and his comrades brought it safe to the beach, where it was soon placed beyond the reach of the waves.

From that day the minister was regarded with a different eye; he gained a position which all his eloquence and piety could never have procured. His word became law, and they believed that the man who could manage a boat in such a sea was the very man to steer them across the ocean of eternity, and to bring them to the harbour of safety. They might not in every case act up to the truth which he preached, but they were prepared to uphold against all comers that it *was* the truth, and that there was not another minister in the Presbytery who, to borrow their own expression, could hold the candle to Mr. Hamilton.

The only occasion on which Stormy Jack had ever been known to exhibit a pugnacious disposition, was at a country fair, on hearing a stalwart farmer, brimful of orthodoxy and whiskey, venture to place his own

minister on a level with the incumbent of Islayhead. Jack, a man of few words, but of an earnest, practical turn of mind, at once invited him to decide their respective merits by a friendly round, which the farmer saw proper to decline, and appeased Jack by an ample apology.

The only approach to an *emeute* that was ever known in Islayhead, was when a deputation of fat baillies from the south was approaching the town, for the purpose of hearing Mr. Hamilton, and giving him a call, in the event of their being satisfied with his preachment. When the carriage appeared in view, a strong body of men marched forth from Islayhead to meet it, and, turning the horses' heads round, said to the trembling baillies—

"Gang ye awa' back the road that ye cam; we have gotten a guid minister, and we mean to keep him!"

As these words were accompanied with sundry hints about the abundance of water in the neighbourhood, and the beneficial effects which the terror-stricken baillies might derive from a temporary immersion,

they were only too glad to escape from their hands; and, on their return to the south, never ceased to lament the Egyptian darkness with which the north of Scotland generally, and Islayhead in particular, were still overspread.

There must have been some strong ties between the minister and his people; for, though he had received repeated offers of livings, far more lucrative and desirable than Islayhead, he had refused them all, and laboured among his rude flock with an unflagging zeal and generous devotion, the good effects of which were already apparent. Most of the public-houses had been closed; the children were educated; the houses had a certain air of respectability; a barometer had been established for the public good; and every Sunday the church was crowded with an attentive audience, who, instead of lounging about the shore, or snoring in their pews as they had been wont to do, listened with gladness to the simple but earnest words in which the message of divine love was made known to them.

Perhaps the reader thinks that we are

dwelling rather too long on the character and doings of the minister of Islayhead; but he is a favourite of ours, and we do not meet with such men every day. Have the goodness to accompany us to his quiet study, and you will have an opportunity of judging for yourself. It is verging closely on midnight, but he is still seated at his table, with a volume of Jeremy Taylor—the quaintest, the sweetest, and the most melodious of all England's divines—spread out before him.

He is a tall, powerful man, about forty years of age, with dark, strongly-marked features, and an air of refinement, and even of elegance, rarely to be met with among the class to which he belongs. His lofty, thoughtful brow, and finely chiselled lips, betoken the possession of considerable powers of intellect, and no ordinary decision of character; while the habitually serious expression of his face is relieved at times by the smile excited by some wise but quaint conceit of the Shakspeare of English theology.

Time, or thought, or sorrow, or all of

these conjointly, have already begun to furrow his brow with those lines which prove that the elasticity of the first era of manhood is gone; and as he pauses at times to think, an air of gentle sadness steals over his countenance, which would seem to show that his mind is directed to other objects than those which surround him. "Coming events," we are told, "cast their shadows before them"; it is equally true that past events leave their shadows behind them—light, graceful shadows at times, which only serve to enhance the present brightness; but sometimes so dark and dreary that they cover our whole path in life, unless we have learned to look upward and beyond.

He closes the volume, and walks to one end of the study, where the wall is covered with the standard productions of the French, German and Italian authors — Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, Petrarch, and Metastasio are placed side by side with Corneille, Racine, and the great divines and preachers to which the age of Louis XIV. gave birth. The Bishop of Meaux is leaning against the

Archbishop of Cambray, without a word of remonstrance on either side; while Massillon and Bourdaloue are quietly fraternising with Calvin and Claude; Goethe and Schiller are on the best of terms with Tholuck and Krummacher—and the most opposite systems in art, politics, and religion seem no longer to be at variance. The true happy family is only to be found on the shelves of a library; there the wicked cease from troubling, and the bitterest enemies are at rest. A well-stocked library is like the grave; it receives all comers without distinction, and makes them repose quietly side by side.

He has just taken down an old volume of German hymns, when a loud knocking at the door attracts his attention.

"Some other soul about to pass away, and they think that my presence will soften its last passage."

He was about to leave the room, when he heard the door opened, and his old housekeeper, Nanny Bruce, demanding who was there at that untimely hour.

"I am sent to tell Mr. Hamilton that the

young laird has fallen down the Corby's Craig, and is not expected to live many hours. The laird and his lady are baith distracted, and they have sent me to tell the minister to come and see poor little Harry, who was always so fond of him, before he dies."

The voice of the servant-man shook as he spoke these words; and poor Nanny, albeit not much given to the melting mood, fairly lifted up her voice and wept, ejaculating at times:—

"The young laird killed! — the bonny laddie that a'body liked; and his puir mither, whase heart was bound up in him!—oh! what will come o' her!—what'll she dae, what'll she dae!"

There is something in the natural outpouring of true, honest sorrow which ever begets sympathy and respect, and the minister tried, by kindly words, to impart that comfort which he did not feel in his own heart, while, at the same time, he examined the servant regarding the nature of the accident.

"Oh! ye ken, sir, what a brave, fearless

lad Harry was. He had gone out riding on his pony, and was returning by the road that leads along the cliffs. When he cam' to the Corby's Craig he found a herd laddie standin' an' greetin' 'cause the win' had blawn his bannet ower the edge. He said he could see it lyin' on a ledge o' the rock a few feet down, but was afraid to lean ower an' catch it. Harry told him to hold his pony, and, without anither word, walked straight to the edge o' the rock, marked the place where the bannet lay, and seeing that he could reach it, leaned ower the dizzy height; he brought it safely up, and with a merry laugh threw it to its owner; but somehow, the laddie canna tell how, he lost his balance and disappeared. They missed him at hame, and searched for him, till they found the boy and the pony on the spot where he had left them. His body was lying on a ledge of the rock about half-way down, and with the aid o' a ladder and some ropes we managed to reach it. His bonny curly hair was a' clotted wi' bluid, and he seemed to be stark an' stiff. The laird himsel' seems to be daized-like, and

the lady's had fit after fit, till she's nae able to gang nor stand. The doctor's been wi' him for hours, but says it's nae a case whaur his skeell can dae ony guid. Aboot half-an-hour sinsyne he opened his een and lookit aboot him for a minute or twa, as if he didna ken whaur he wair. Then he seemed to min' a' aboot it, and said in a low weak voice, 'O my mother!' and turned aside his face and cried; after a time he said, 'Send for Mr. Hamilton,' and I hae na letten the grass grow aneath the horse's feet in riding frae Inverchewan tae the manse. Oh! wull a' woons!—my puir young maister, that ever I should ha' lived to see this day!"

Mr. Hamilton had hastened to the stable before the servant had finished his narrative; and having hurriedly saddled his horse, prepared to accompany him to Inverchewan, where for the moment we must leave him, to return to Ninian Kynoch.

CHAPTER III.

Ninian, after shaking off the sea-water like a rough Newfoundland dog, proceeded to dress himself in the coarse pea-jacket and other articles of clothing with which the kindness of his friends readily supplied him. Father and son then walked through the principal street of Loanhead, till they reached their home, a two-storied house, built of red sandstone, and having an air of greater comfort than the neighbouring cottages.

Let us describe what has been passing in the principal room, which serves at once as kitchen and parlor, a short time before their arrival.

Mrs. Kynoch, a neatly-dressed woman, between forty and fifty years of age, with a kind, gentle expression of countenance, is busily engaged in preparing the family supper. Her daughter Alice, a tall, pale, fair-haired girl, with those wonderful, large,

lustrous eyes, through which the soul seems to look directly upon every surrounding object, and which are seldom seen save in the case of those who are labouring under consumption, is seated at the window, which overlooks the sea, watching at times the variety of colouring which it assumes at sunset, and wondering how many times the sun will rise and set before he has risen and set on her for ever. Unlike many assailed by the same inexorable foe, she knows that the sand of her brief existence is fast running out; and she has learned to possess her soul in patience, and to wait calmly till her change cometh. The approach of that change is so gradual and painless as to be almost imperceptible, and even her nearest friends are scarcely conscious of her danger.

It is not from want of sympathy, but from the impulse of a pure and joyous heart, overflowing with a sense of its own happiness, that her friend and companion, Marion Leslie, is singing in a sweet, low voice snatches of some old ballad, as she walks backward and forward, spinning at

the "muckle wheel," and exhibiting at every turn the full outlines of her lithe and graceful figure. At the first glance at that figure it might be thought that she had already reached to the full maturity of womanhood, but watch her face as she stoops to unravel her thread near the window, and it will be seen that not more than sixteen summers can have passed over her. And one glimpse at that face would recall the words of the poet—

> "Fair Highland maid, a very shower
> Of earthly beauty is thy dower;"

and that beauty is all the more striking, from its being unadorned. Marion is dressed in the usual white *wrapper*, as it is called, worn by the girls of her age and condition; and her only ornament, if it deserves the name, is the black silken *snood* which crowns her forehead. But that girlish face requires none of the adventitious aids of art to enhance its loveliness. Nature has bestowed upon her gifts of beauty which are rarely found conjoined, except it be, in some rare cases, in the northern parts of Scotland, and on the shores

of Brittany. Where else can we see those eyes of deep liquid blue in unison with hair black and glossy as the raven's wing, or the elements of beauty peculiar to the blonde and the brunette, united in the same face? Such a face was Marion Leslie's, and its effect was heightened by the arch smile that played around her lips as she sung—

"Oh, weel may the keel row, the keel row, the keel row,
Oh, weel may the keel row that my lad's in."

Or changed to the more plaintive song—

"I sit on my creepy, an' spin at my wheel,
An' think o' the laddie that loes me sae weel."

Poor, pale Alice, as she sat and watched the last rays of the sun playing with the waves, could not help at times turning round and smiling upon Marion, as with rapid pace she followed the thread backwards and forwards, and brought forth snatches of old Scottish ballads from her well-stocked mental *répertoire.* Even staid, sedate Mrs. Kynoch stopped at times to listen with an approving smile; for though opposed, as a general principle, to the singing of profane and unprofitable songs,

as smacking too much of the vanities of this wicked world, she could not feel it in her heart to check the flow of the young girl's unconscious happiness. Moreover, she knew that Marion's sweet songs had a syren-like power over the soul of her worthy husband, whose big heart never failed to be melted by the pathos of those old ballads, where sorrow seems to have been the priest that wedded the words to the music, and the music to the words. Whatever, therefore, served as a link to bind him to his home, and to prevent those visits to the ale-house, which were only too frequent among the thirsty souls at Loanhead, was to a certain extent appreciated and valued. And yet it would have been inconsistent with her ideas of propriety to allow the light-hearted Marion to indulge the full flow of her gaiety without a sort of formal protest, more for the purpose of satisfying her conscience than with any real desire to check it. Besides, people at Mrs. Kynoch's age, when they see young people too happy, consider it their duty to warn them of coming evil, and to mingle a

few drops from the bitter gall of their own experience in the cup of pleasure, which might otherwise prove too sweet.

"Oh! lassie, 'ye little ken what the warld means. When ye have lived as lang as me, less singing 'll sair ye."

"Come now, aunty, ye ken ye could never sing onything but the Auld Hundred; and ye tauld me yoursell that when a lassie ye joined the precentor's class, and, when it cam to your turn to sing, your voice was sae croaky, that he speered gin ye had the croup. Besides, ye ken that naebody likes better to hear me sing than yersell."

"Weel, I dinna object to singin' as singin'. It's a natural gift, which ilka body does nae get. But ye shouldna aye keep strummin' at these auld strouds. They just fill a young lassie's head wi' nonsense. What for shouldna ye dae as the Apostle tells ye, an' sing psalms when ye are merry? Surely there's as muckle sense in 'French' or 'Denmark' as in 'Logie o' Buchan' or 'The Boatie Rows.'"

"I dinna dispute that, aunty. There's, maybe, as muckle sense and mair. But

somehow, ye see, it does na stick to my mind. The first time I heard 'Logie o' Buchan,' it haunted me a' day, an' I dreamed o' it at nicht, and it was never out o' my head till I kent ilka note o' it. But I canna say as muckle aboot the psalm tunes. I like them weel eneuch in the kirk, though John Grey, the precentor's voice, is aboot as cracked as our auld parritch pot; but I canna say that I ever dreamed aboot them, or that they haunted me through the day, like these profane strouds o' sangs, as ye ca' them, though for my part I canna see ony great harm in them."

"Aweel, aweel, we canna pit an auld head on young shoulders, but the day'll maybe come yet when ye'll get mair comfort frae ae line of King David than a' the sangs in the world."

"Sorrow comes soon enough, mother," said Alice; "and we need not anticipate it. Besides, I like to see young people happy. I can sympathize with them, though I can no longer share in their mirth. I can recall the time before God laid his hand heavily upon me—when it was happiness to live, to

feel that I was alive and capable of enjoying all things in this beautiful world of ours. It *is* a beautiful world, though I can now see nothing of it but the strip of blue ocean before the window, and the waves breaking on the beach; and Marion is the connecting link between the present and the past—between the loneliness of the sick-room and the brightness and joy of the world without. I like to hear her simple, old ballads, though I can no longer sing them myself. They carry me back into a world of thought and feeling from which I am fast slipping away. You may not quite understand what I mean, mother, but I am sure that you will not find fault with Marion for singing, when I say that the sound of her sweet young voice is always a pleasure to me."

Mrs. Kynoch was one of a class by no means uncommon, the members of which feel it to be their special mission in life to keep young people down. Every youthful exuberance of animal spirits appeared to her an offence against propriety, if not something worse, which she felt herself at

once called upon to rebuke, or rather to restrain. Her own life had, on the whole, been rather a happy one, and it would be difficult to point out any great grief which had fallen to her lot. She was in the enjoyment of good health, and of more than the usual share of earthly comforts enjoyed by her class; she had an affectionate husband and children, who were all that a mother could desire—and yet, to hear her speak of the evils of life, one would have supposed that her sufferings had surpassed those of the man of Uz, and that life itself was a burden to her. The happiness of youth, instead of reminding her that she also had once been young, seemed only to conjure up visions of future misery. The greater the present enjoyment, the more intense the future suffering by which it was to be atoned for. A child overflowing with health and spirits, would only make her shake her head and sigh; and if she had seen a lamb frisking in the field, she would only have thought of the shambles and the butcher's knife. This want of sympathy with youthful enjoyment was the result of

religious conviction, and not of natural feeling. She was at bottom a kind-hearted woman, but she would have thought it carnal and mundane in the extreme to have laid aside the asceticism of her outward profession, or to have relaxed at the sight of happy, unconscious youth.

The poor, weak, suffering Alice was entirely different in character. An invalid for years, excluded from the outer world, and condemned, as it were, to count the sands of life as they glided softly away, she could still sympathize with all that is bright and joyous in life—rejoicing with those who rejoiced, and weeping with those who wept. Suffering had had a chastening influence upon her—had enlarged her sympathies, and taught her to love all God's creatures, and all that tended to their happiness. There was a world of love in those large eyes, sparkling with unnatural light, and seeming to look beyond the present, into that future world the dark shadows of which were fast closing around poor Alice. Dark shadows to others, but full of light to her—for she could see with

the eye of faith the delectable mountains, and the pleasant land of Beulah, and the expectant angels; but familiarity with the realities of that other life, on which she was about to enter, had not deprived her of a warm and tender sympathy with the exuberant happiness and overflowing mirth of her young friend, Marion Leslie.

Those among the labouring classes who die early, often attain a refinement of manner and feeling rare among the class to which they belong. It seems as if the refinement of the soul becomes more distinct and clear, in proportion as the form in which it is enshrouded, grows more attenuated. There is often a feeling of awe in the presence of these suffering ones, as if we felt ourselves brought face to face with one who belongs to the world of spirits, and has been purified from all that is evil in our sinful nature.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Kynoch was preparing to assure her daughter that she could never find fault with what could give pleasure to her, though she should like to see Marion a little more devoted to sacred music, when she was stopped short by the entrance of her husband and her son.

If Mrs. Kynoch had been a person of delicate nerves, she might have fainted at the sudden apparition of one whom she had reason to believe to be still at sea. But the class to which she belongs do not believe in nerves. They have great faith in bones, and muscles, and sinews, but to be called nervous is with them an insult. Their nerves are under such excellent discipline, that they are never betrayed into anything bordering on the demonstrative, and their perfect self-control might excite the envy of those votaries of fashion who believe the height of good breeding to be the

repression of all outward manifestation of feeling.

"Eh! Ninian, laddie! is this you? Weel, I *am* glad to see ye back again, hale and hearty. And sic a protty chield as ye hae grown. Od, if ye are nae nearly as high as your father, tho' aiblins ye hinna cairried the breadth wi' ye. That'll come in time, nae fear. Weel, the sight o' you is guid for sair een; for, oh, laddie, I hae had siccan dreams about ye, fechtin' wi' bears, an' smotherin' i' the snaw, an' jammed atween wa's o' ice, that I hae aften said I wad never lat ye to the sea again."

Ninian's ear had caught but little of this disjointed discourse, for his eye had been attracted by the Hebe-like figure of Marion Leslie, who continued her labours at the "muckle wheel," after the first moment of surprise was past, as if she were quite unconcerned about the scene that was passing before her. At times, indeed, she looked with a shy, timid glance at the new comer; but finding that she was the object of close examination, she half turned her back upon him, and gave her whole attention to her

wheel. At least she appeared to do so, but, to judge by the keen interest depicted in her face, she was not altogether unconscious of what was passing around her.

On seeing that no kindly glance was to welcome him from this quarter, Ninian turned to his sister Alice, who expressed, in a few simple words, her joy at his return, and her gratitude to Him who watches over those who go down on the great waters in ships and see His mighty works. Ninian felt her mental superiority, and respected her piety, without being altogether able to understand or to appreciate it. He thought it all right and proper that one so weak and suffering as Alice, who had so little time to spend in this world, should make every preparation to enter upon the next; but he could not perceive the same necessity in his own case, so long as he was in the full enjoyment of health, and of every other blessing of life. Except on this one subject, there was the fullest sympathy and confidence between the brother and sister; and Alice had the good sense not to give her brother a distaste for religion by forcing the

subject upon his notice, while his mind was as yet unprepared for its reception. She chose rather to wait patiently till circumstances might arise, when he might feel the need of that which had sustained her during long hours of suffering, after all earthly help was in vain.

There was a perfect understanding between the young sailor and all the other inmates of the house, except Marion Leslie. But why was it that the youthful beauty had no kindly glance or word of welcome for one who had been her playmate for years, and shared the same home? The reason of this will be better understood when we relate the circumstances connected with her birth and early history.

Marion was a full cousin of Harry Leslie, the only son and heir of the laird of Inverchewan, whom Mr. Hamilton had just been invited to visit. The estate of Inverchewan extended for some miles along the coast, and comprehended nearly one half of the parish of Islayhead. The rental was considerable, and might well have justified the laird in holding up his head among the

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old county families. But the founder of the Leslie family was not an ambitious man, and had the good sense to avoid all rivalry with those who, though, perhaps, inferior to him in wealth, were superior to him in birth and ancestry.

There are old county families in Scotland that look down upon our nobility as of mushroom growth, and hug themselves on their ancestral superiority, albeit unknown and untitled. The first laird of Inverchewan did not belong to this class. He knew that his own family was only of yesterday, and that the assumption of the airs of a *grand seigneur* would only expose him to ridicule and contempt. He was an honest and enterprising grazier, who drove an extensive trade in cattle. He was the first who opened up the trade in cattle between England and his native country, many years before the introduction of steam shortened the distance between the metropolis and the remotest parts of the empire. A journey from the north of Scotland to London, whether by land or by sea, was at that time judged such a serious

undertaking, that the boldest traveller rarely ventured upon it without taking the precaution to make his will. But old Leslie was familiar with the road, and the greater part of his life was spent in purchasing the cattle of the farmers and proprietors of his native county, and conducting them in person to the English markets. He had started with little capital, but his thorough honesty and approved integrity soon won for him the confidence of those with whom he had dealings, so that it was not unusual for him to defer payment till his return from England with the proceeds of the sale.

On one occasion he had embarked his whole capital in the purchase of cattle, and conveyed them in successive droves to the English market, where he sold them to such advantage, that he resolved to settle down, on his return to Scotland, and enjoy the fruit of his labours. During his journey north he carried the whole of his money in his saddle-bags, and, while crossing a lonely moor in the north of England, he was attacked by three highwaymen on foot, who

tried to drag him from his horse. He made a stout resistance, but it would have fared ill with him if a tinker had not come up, who, without inquiring into the merits of the case, struck in at once in aid of the weaker party. The mender of pots and pans did yeoman's service; the assailants were beaten off, and the grazier was not ungrateful to his deliverer.

Old Leslie on his return resolved no longer to tempt fortune, and invested his money in the purchase of Inverchewan, which happened to be then in the market. He spent the rest of his life in improving the estate, and saw the rental doubled before he died. The neighbouring lairds were always glad to consult him in the management of their affairs, and to extend to him their hospitality, but the stout old grazier never forgot his origin, or the means by which he had risen; and when old English Ned, the tinker, paid him a visit, in compliance with a promise exacted in the hour of victory, he placed him on his right hand at table, and told his wife and family that they owed their all to the brave

man who used his cudgel so well on the Cumberland moor. He did all that he could to induce Ned to accept a home under his hospitable roof, but in vain; the sturdy old tinker mounted his donkey after a brief visit, and, bidding his host a hearty farewell, turned his face southwards.

The grazier's eldest son succeeded to the estate, and walked in the steps of his father. He had the good sense to avoid entering into rivalry with the neighbouring lairds, and devoted his whole time to the improvement of his estate, and other pursuits becoming a country gentleman.

He married a woman of good family, who in due time presented him with two sons, the elder of whom succeeded him, and was now laird of Inverchewan. The second son, Frank, entered the Navy, and rose to the rank of lieutenant, when, owing to the conclusion of the war, he was induced to leave the service, and to accept employment in the Coast-guard. He held for several years the command of the party stationed at Islayhead, and distinguished himself by the stern measures which he

adopted for the repression of smuggling.

The fishermen on the coast were all more or less addicted to this illicit traffic, and his predecessor, a weak, easy man, had from prudential motives connived at it. His early knowledge of the locality made him acquainted with all the places favourable for the landing of smuggled goods, and the different caves in which they were wont to be concealed, until they could be removed with safety. His great physical strength and reckless bravery led him to despise the danger to which he was exposed in his encounters with the smugglers, who soon found that they had an adversary against whom none of their usual resources could avail them, and abstained from a traffic which no longer paid.

Among the smugglers who had suffered most by the seizure of their goods was old Mackay, the uncle of Ninian Kynoch, who had been successfully engaged in the trade for many years, and had amassed considerable wealth. His losses had exasperated his mind against the Leslie family; and his hatred of Frank Leslie was increased by the

discovery that he had won the affections of an orphan girl, a near relative of his own, whom he had received into his house and treated as his daughter. Soon after this discovery, Frank Leslie disappeared, not without the suspicion of foul play, as the feeling towards him in the quarter was notorious. Every effort was made by his family to discover his fate, but, though nearly seventeen years had elapsed since his disappearance, nothing had been heard of him, and his friends had almost ceased to hope that he was still alive.

The one who had most reason to lament his absence was the poor girl whom he had loved, whose condition would have exposed her to the stern discipline of the Kirk Session, if Mr. Hamilton had not taken an interest in her case, and satisfied himself, from letters in her possession, that, according to the law of Scotland, she was the wife of Frank Leslie, though the Church had not sanctioned their union. Notwithstanding this proof, old Mackay insisted that she should leave his house; and it would have fared ill with her if Mrs. Kynoch had not

kindly received her, and showed her all the attention and sympathy which her case demanded. Soon after this she died in giving birth to a girl, who was baptized by the name of Marion Leslie. The Inverchewan family took no notice of the little orphan, as they felt their dignity compromised by such a low connection; and the helpless Marion was thus left to the entire care of Mrs. Kynoch, who had brought her up as her own daughter.

Ninian was a few years older than the little Marion, but they soon became inseparable companions. It was he who taught her where to find the brightest *buckies* on the shore, where to drop her line for the unsuspecting *sillochs*, and where to find the brownest hazel-nuts among the neighbouring braes. It was he who led her by the hand to the "side school" taught by old Stirling, the terror of all the rising generation in Loanhead, and on more than one occasion received the punishment which that awful instructor of youth would have inflicted on her. Not that Stirling approved of vicarious punishment, but he was de-

ceived into the belief that the fault which led him to wield the *tawse* of justice, was Ninian's, and not hers.

The bolder and more adventurous spirit of the boy often led her into dangers, which served only to increase her admiration of the master spirit who could overcome them. She had often stood on the brink of the precipitous rocks which withstand the fierce assaults of the German ocean, and watched from that dizzy height his descent in search of the eggs of the sea-fowl, which had built their nests there with a sense of perfect security. She had seen him dive into the whirling stream which rushed tumultuously through the narrow channel which divided part of the rocky coast, and had watched with beating heart till she saw his head rise above the waves, far from the spot where he had first disappeared. She had often ventured with him in a light boat far out to sea; and on one occasion, when the wind and tide were against them, and they were unable to return before morning, she sat in the stern of the boat, through the long cold night, wrapped in the boy's great-coat,

without a word of complaint. And when they reached their home Ninian generously took the whole blame upon himself, and would willingly have borne the punishment, but Stormy Jack interceded in their behalf.

"Na, na, guidwife, ye must e'en let it pass. It's i' the bluid, an' ye canna root it out—as the auld cock craws, the young ane learns. The Kynochs a' tak' tae the sea as gin it were their natural element. But, look you, my boy, if ye ever tak' that puir, fusionless lassie outside o' the bay again, ye shall pay dearly for your folly. I'll bind ye apprentice tae auld Adam Mackay, and ye'll soon ken mair aboot mooters and mealy sids than rudders and rough seas."

The threat of binding him apprentice to the old miller was the worst punishment which his father's mind could conceive, and it never failed to produce its intended effect. Old Mackay was not the most amiable person in the world, as will afterwards appear, and the miller's dusty garb was the last in the world with which Ninian would have wished to invest himself.

Thus the boy and girl had grown up side by side. Their lives had flowed in the same channel, like two gentle streams which coalesce and peacefully seek for the same outlet. They never dreamed that their lives would be different from what they then were. They had their quarrels at times (what children have not?), but these only served to strengthen their mutual affection and to draw them more closely together. They had not a hope, or a desire, or an ambitious wish, beyond the simple life which they led, or the humble village in which they were born. They had no plans for the future; the present was so rich in happiness that they were content to enjoy it without allowing the dread or the suspicion of coming change to mar their happiness.

But this life could not last for ever. The young bird is content to remain in the parental nest till its wings are strong enough to skim through the air, when it ventures forth to catch its own flies, and to begin its own independent existence. The young fisherman, when he had reached his eighteenth year, found that he could no

longer resist the impulse which drove him forth to visit those ice-bound regions of the far distant north, where the leviathan of the deep attracts the hardy sailor. During many months of absence in those inhospitable regions he had done his part manfully as a sailor, and looked forward with eager expectation to a home which was now more attractive to him than ever, as it contained one whom absence had taught him to be dearer to him than life.

Ninian was an affectionate and a dutiful son; but perhaps Marion Leslie was most present to his thoughts when he ventured to swim ashore—with what result has been already shewn.

CHAPTER V.

Will the reader now accompany us to Inverchewan Castle, the seat of the Leslies? He need not be afraid of any minute description of the outward appearance, or internal arrangements, of that old castellated keep. If he is curious in such matters, he may find everything to gratify his curiosity in the history of any of the northern counties in Scotland, in all of which similar buildings are to be found. They were erected at a period when houses and lands were held by a somewhat uncertain tenure, and when it was necessary that the proprietors should be able to assert their rights by force of arms, and to defend their homes against their lawless neighbours.

The old castle of Inverchewan was erected some centuries ago, by the representative of the ancient family, from whose possession it had passed into that of the

Leslies. A modern architect, influenced by modern ideas, and living in these peaceful modern times, on contemplating such a building, would feel a pleasant glow of self-satisfaction at the superiority we have attained in matters of taste over our rude forefathers. In truth, there is nothing about the old building to gratify the taste, or to excite the admiration of anyone except an enthusiastic antiquary. It is an old, grey, square tower, four storeys high, with a turret erected at each corner, and a narrow, sloping roof surmounted by an ancient trumpeter in a dilapidated condition, essaying in vain for centuries to blow his horn. The walls are perforated with loop-holes, through which, in former days, men-in-arms directed their ponderous muskets against their assailants without. The entrance is protected by a door of solid oak; above it there is an opening in the wall, through which, if tradition is true, the molten lead was more than once poured down on the heads of the assailants who were striving to force their way into the interior. The hall occupies the whole of the basement

floor, and its walls are hung with pictures, of which more anon.

The present laird does not inhabit the castle properly so called. His grandfather, the wealthy grazier, on purchasing the property—from a desire to avoid ostentation, or perhaps from a regard to personal comfort—caused a wing to be added to one of the sides of the ancient building, and was content to live in a place which was little superior to a farm-house of the better class till his death. His son and heir, in order to give greater completeness to the building, erected another wing, similar to the first, on the other side of the castle; and as the rooms are larger and more convenient, it is now usually occupied by the family, the apartments in the other wing being converted into bed-rooms for the accommodation of such guests as might honour Inverchewan with their presence.

The present laird is not haunted by the mania of building, but his favourite hobby has involved more outlay than if he had razed the old castle to the ground, and built it afresh. Men often pride themselves

on the possession of some imaginary quality, in which everyone else sees them to be utterly deficient; and at every attempt to dispossess them of this error they only cling to it with the greater tenacity. They may have indisputable claims on the respect or consideration of the world in other matters, but, overlooking or despising these, they stake their happiness on the recognition of claims which everyone knows to be ungrounded.

Little more than half a century had elapsed since the grazier, the founder of the Leslie family, was gathered to his fathers; and yet his grandson, the present laird, notwithstanding every proof to the contrary, had adopted the singular idea that he was descended from one of the most ancient families in Scotland, and that the line of his noble ancestry could be traced to the remotest antiquity. There were facts to the contrary which might have staggered the most credulous mind, but they had no such effect on the laird of Inverchewan. Monsieur Jourdain could not overlook the fact that his father was a draper, though he

greedily adopted the idea that he merely sold cloth to oblige his friends, and not from any sordid motive; but the laird treated his grandfather, the grazier, as an absolute myth, invented by his enemies from feelings of envy, and the consciousness of their own inferior descent.

He was not in any respect a man of superior intellect, but he might have passed muster on all other points, except this delusion, which had taken such entire possession of his mind, that the smallest allusion to the grazier excited him almost to frenzy. It was the one unpardonable offence, which he never forgave; and his neighbours, on perceiving that he was incurable, and impervious to all argument, ceased to reason with him, though in private they enjoyed many a hearty laugh at his expense, and even at his own table treated him and his claims with a *persiflage* of which he was fortunately unconscious.

If the laird could have had his own way in the matter, he would have extinguished the whole race of graziers, and blotted out the word from the English language; but

as he could not massacre the innocent graziers, he concentrated all his hate against the mythical one, whom lying tongues affirmed to be the founder of the Inverchewan family. When he saw that mythical personage in the dining-room, attired by some local artist in broad bonnet and flowing plaid, with a group of "hummel-stots," with their heads turned southward, in the distance, he mentally exclaimed, "An enemy hath done this!" And his first act, on finding himself master of the property, was to consign the unfortunate grazier to the flames, and to forbid all allusion to his past or possible existence.

"Cumberland Ned," the sturdy tinker, with his donkey and panniers, shared the same fate; the gratitude of the grazier had tried to perpetuate the memory of the brave deed on canvas, while his grandson strove to destroy every object which could possibly recall the memory of either.

Such was the laird of Inverchewan—a fool, and worse than a fool, on this one point, which rendered him the dupe of every designing person who chose to prey

upon his credulity. The great ambition of his life had been to form a portrait-gallery of the noble Leslies who had gone before, and rogues were not wanting to fool him to the top of his bent. The hall of the old castle was hung with Leslies, undistinguished by that similarity of feature and expression supposed in every case to mark the members of our noble families to the remotest generations. On the contrary, the Leslies seemed to have had the wonderful power of transmuting their faces and features into something new in every fresh generation, so that there was as much variety in their faces as in the dresses which they wore.

In the selection of the last they seemed to have paid little attention to the fashions of the different periods in which they lived: the courtiers of the reign of Fergus I. had exchanged dresses with those of the reign of George IV. These incongruities would have excited the suspicion of a less credulous mind than that of the laird of Inverchewan; but a man who denied the existence of his own grandfather was not

likely to be affected by ordinary kinds of evidence.

This portrait-gallery, about as genuine as the one exhibited to the visitors at Holyrood, was the delight of the laird's existence. We have all heard of the Eastern courtier who spent his leisure hours in contemplating his shepherd's dress, and playing on his shepherd's pipe, the memorials of his former happy, though humble, existence; the laird spent *his* leisure hours in studying the portraits of his noble ancestors, and descanting on their virtues to those unfortunate friends whom he contrived to decoy into his sanctum. Most of his friends, however, were now on their guard, and contrived, by some ready excuse, to escape the threatened lecture on the Leslie ancestry.

This aversion to his portrait-gallery could not altogether escape the notice of the laird, but his vanity found an easy explanation in the belief that they could not gaze upon such a noble collection without feeling that they themselves were upstarts of yesterday, *sans père ni mère.* He had ceased, therefore, to invite his guests to visit the hall, from a

good-natured desire to spare those feelings of self-superiority which could scarcely fail to be excited by the exhibition of the portraits of a race the origin of which was lost in the mists of preceding ages.

Every man has his hobby. A man may be unsound in one part, and healthy in every other. The existence of a delusion on one particular subject does not prove that a man is of unsound mind, or who, we should like to know, is sane? The presence of such a delusion may tend to prove that the mind in which it has sprung up is not of the highest order; but men may manage to make their way through life without possessing minds of the highest order, especially if they happen to be the heirs of large estates. The laird of Inverchewan rode through life on his favourite hobby, without much inconvenience to himself or others. His hobby, it is true, was rather an expensive one, but his expenditure in other matters was far from extravagant, and his friends and neighbours were disposed to take a favourable view of a delusion which after all was harmless, and

afforded them amusement. As to the rest, the laird was a good-natured, easy-going man of the world, about fifty years of age, with that rubicund complexion and incipient corpulency which betoken a moderate enjoyment of the good things of this life.

The lady of Inverchewan, as she was popularly called, was a tall, thin woman, about the same age as her husband. In her youth she had been a beauty and a coquette, and, after rejecting many lovers, who had been attracted by her charms, and encouraged by her apparent kindness, found herself, at forty years of age, in the enjoyment of single bliss, with little danger of that bliss being interrupted. Through one of those caprices which we profess ourselves unable to explain, she was now as anxious to yield the fortress of her heart as she had formerly been to defend it against all comers; and when the laird met her, during a visit to the Scottish metropolis, she opened the gates and surrendered unconditionally.

Their union had been on the whole a

happy one, and the laird felt grateful to the woman who had presented him with a son, and thus aided in perpetuating the noble race of the Leslies. The only serious difference which had ever arisen between them was when the lady, soon after her marriage, keenly alive to the ridicule to which her husband exposed himself through his fabulous ancestry, had ventured to question the genuineness of those suppositious Leslies who adorned the hall; and on this occasion his anger was so great, that she had ever afterwards carefully avoided the subject, and patiently listened to the laird's interminable harangues about the family genealogy. She only ventured, at times, to throw in a casual claim for her own family, which had counted among its members several lords of session, all of whom the laird professed to regard with profound contempt, and met with the disparaging remark:—

"Pooh! pooh! Maggie! Ye ken they were a' paper lords."

They both professed to be members of the Episcopal Church. The laird was fond of dilating on the sacrifices which his fore-

fathers had made for the Stuart family, and considered himself bound in honour to adhere to that form of church government which the Stuarts endeavoured to establish in Scotland. He had the idea, also, that Presbyterian and plebeian were almost synonymous terms, inasmuch as most of the families of rank and position no longer belonged to the Established Church, the members of which are confined in a great measure to the middle and lower classes. Notwithstanding his professed preference for the other communion, the laird was in the habit of attending the parish church, where, in truth, he always found himself more at ease, as there were no rivals to dispute his rank, or lessons for the day to hunt after in the prayer-book. It required no intellectual effort to rise up and sit down with the rest of the congregation; and as the laird was naturally a quietist, he preferred the mode of worship which gave him least trouble.

He had also a sincere respect for Mr. Hamilton. He was not a religious man—far from it—nor was he disposed to think

highly of the good which religion can effect —but he had discernment enough to perceive that Mr. Hamilton was a man of superior attainments, and he respected him as the member of a family whose claims to ancient birth were indisputable. There had sprung up, therefore, as much intimacy between them as could be expected to exist between two men who had so little in common. Mr. Hamilton would have been a less frequent visitor at the Castle, if he had not formed a sincere attachment to Harry Leslie—a boy who already gave promise of great talent and amiability of character. A less amiable child would have been ruined by the foolish indulgence of his parents; but there are some children who will not spoil, and Harry was one of them. Both of his parents had urged Mr. Hamilton to undertake the charge of his education, and though he had at first excused himself, on the ground of professional duty, he had at length consented to give him two or three hours every day, which were devoted to the classics and modern languages, in which Mr. Hamilton was a proficient. The

pupil's precocious talents and winning manners endeared him to his teacher, who loved him with all the strength of his manly nature. Judge, then, of his grief on learning that he had fallen a victim to a generous impulse, and was now at the point of death.

When Mr. Hamilton reached the Castle, he was struck with the softened, subdued tone of all whom he met. All seemed to feel the solemn, mysterious presence of death. The servant who took charge of his horse was so overpowered by his feelings that he could scarcely reply to his hurried inquiries.

"My young master is sinking fast, sir—the doctor says he cannot hold out long."

"Is he conscious? Does he recognize anyone?"

"No, sir. The doctor says the brain is injured. He is in a kind of swoon. He has taken no notice of anything since he was brought in."

He was conducted to the chamber where the poor boy lay. His eyes were open, but

there was no expression in them—no sign that he recognized anyone around him. A servant was wiping away with a sponge the blood, which oozed slowly from a wound in his forehead; and the village doctor stood by, with the helpless air of one who felt that this case was beyond his skill. Mrs. Leslie was extended on a couch in a half-unconscious state, while her husband paced the room with rapid stride, as men are wont to do when under the influence of any strong passion or mental emotion.

He pressed Mr. Hamilton's hand in silence, and continued to march backward and forward with the same rapid, noiseless pace as before. His eye was never for an instant removed from his boy; he gazed on him with a look of hungering affection, as if he wished to stamp his every feature upon his memory before the relentless one came and removed him from his sight.

Mr. Hamilton approached the couch on which Mrs. Leslie lay. He called her by name, and strove to rouse her from the state of stupor into which she was fast sinking. On hearing his voice she looked

eagerly in his face, with eyes that seemed to crave for hope, and said—

"Oh, Mr. Hamilton!—tell me that there is hope, or my heart ill break. He is my only son. I have no other child. He is dearer to me than life itself. I cannot live without him. Tell me that there is hope, and that he yet may live."

"He is in the hands of God. We must trust in His goodness and mercy. All that human skill can do will be done. I feel as if your grief were mine, for I loved him as my own son."

He then turned to the medical man, who informed him that, from the nature of the injuries which he had received, he could not possibly survive above a few hours. The best medical advice could avail nothing: but, to satisfy the parents, an express had been sent, demanding the presence of the two best doctors in the nearest town. It was probable that he would die before their arrival.

"He is conscious at intervals, though too weak to speak much. We have tried to keep him from speaking. He seems to

recognize your voice, and perhaps a few words from you might soothe him. At all events, it can do no harm, as he cannot live long."

Mr. Hamilton sat down by the bed of the dying boy, and took his small hot hand in his. He gently pressed it, and looked tenderly in his face, to catch the first gleam of recognition. It came at length. The wandering eye came back again and again, and gazed on Mr. Hamilton's face inquiringly, till at length it lighted up with pleasure, and a faint smile stole over the flushed features.

"Is it you? It is so kind of you to come. I know I am dying. It is hard to die so young, and oh! my poor papa and mamma, what will they do when I am gone?"

The weak, little voice was interrupted by a convulsive sob. Mr. Hamilton waited till the paroxysm was over, and then spoke soothingly of the strength and comfort to be derived from a higher source.

"I know, I feel it all to be true. I have always learned to love Him since I read

that He took little children in His arms and blessed them. Tell me more about Him, and His love. I cannot speak or think much, but I can listen for a little."

The words spoken by Mr. Hamilton were simple words, such as He to whom they referred would have spoken to a child. They breathed of hope and comfort and forgiveness. They pointed to that purer and better life on which he was about to enter, and to the time when he would meet —never again to be separated—those whom he now felt it so hard to leave behind. He paused at times till the wandering eye came back again, and repeated his words again and again, till he was sure that they were understood.

"Will papa and mamma be there, and you too, and poor old Jenny, my nurse? I could not be happy if Jenny were not there. Read to me about the great multitude, with the white robes and the palms in their hands."

Mr. Hamilton read those sublime verses, which give us a glimpse, as it were, of the glory that is yet to be revealed. The boy

listened with rapt attention, and when Mr. Hamilton had concluded, the doctor whispered to him—

"His mind will soon begin to wander, and he may not return to consciousness again. His father and mother had better speak to him just now, or it may be too late afterwards. Try to soothe Mrs. Leslie, so as to prepare her for the interview. For her own sake, for the sake of her dying boy, she must not give way to any paroxysm of grief."

Mrs. Leslie was gradually aroused from her stupor of grief, and strengthened for the coming interview. She and her husband seated themselves beside their dying child, and gazed fondly on the little form which was dearer to them than all living things. Neither of them was demonstrative, but for once the floodgates of feeling were opened by the all-powerful hand of nature; and the strong man and his wife wept as Rachel wept, and would not be comforted.

They could not venture to speak, their

hearts were too full, but they stooped down over their only son, and gave him the last kiss of parental love, and then turned away to weep in secret.

There are hours when all must bow before the sacred shrine of grief, and then turn reverently aside. Who is fit to be the comforter of Rachel, when she first begins to weep for her children? Not you or I, my sympathizing brother. The heart is empty, but it has no space for our words of comfort. It knows its own bitterness. It is overwhelmed by the consciousness of its irreparable loss. We may sympathize with such sorrow, but we cannot realize it in all its intensity. Let us bow, therefore, before it in a reverent spirit, and treat it as one of those things which the poet tells us are "*sacro digna silentio.*"

It was thus that Mr. Hamilton acted. He knew that the flood of human sorrow in its first outburst is not to be restrained by scriptural references or moral apothegms, and that the overloaded heart must discharge itself of its first burden of grief, before it can expand for the reception of

words of comfort; and that these words, however powerful at an after-period, are at first useless as water spilt on the sand of the desert. He left the parents, therefore, to weep, because he knew that *then* they could not be comforted.

The little tiny bark of life is rocking as it feels the first touch of the dark waves of that ocean which it has now reached. They seem to play with the hopes and fears of those who are watching its fate, bearing it with them as they advance and recede, till at length it crosses the bar which separates the stream of life. from the ocean of eternity, and is seen no more from the strand of time.

The last prop of the Leslies is gone. The lands of Inverchewan are without an heir. A small, motionless body, draped in white, is extended in the hall—the eyes of supposititious Leslies look grimly down upon it, and the tenants march past in solemn silence, and take their last look of one who, if he had lived, would have been their laird. At length the body is conveyed to the old churchyard beside the shore, where

the dead, if they have ears, may hear the gentle ripple of the waves against the sand.

CHAPTER VI.

Ninian sought for an opportunity of seeing Marion alone. He had so much to tell her, which he could not well speak in the presence of others; but then there were so many points on which he had to satisfy the curiosity of his parents, that the evening slipped away without the desired interview. It was something, however, to know that she was one of his hearers, as he spoke of his adventures in the distant north; and perhaps it was her presence which inspired him unconsciously with unusual eloquence, as, Othello-like, he spoke of the dangers he had undergone. His eye occasionally glanced furtively at her face, as he told his simple tale of hardship bravely endured; and he was pleased to observe that she listened to him with rapt attention, and that more than once a tear was glistening in her eye. He was more pleased with

this exhibiton of feeling than with the encouraging assurance of Stormy Jack, that in a few years he would be every bit as good a sailor as himself; or the noisy exclamations of his mother—

"Eh, sirs!—my puir bairn!—it would be a tempting o' Providence to gang back there again, amang bears an' whales, an' sic ither outlandish cattle."

Alice sat and listened, but spoke not, though it might be seen, by the silent movement of her lips, that she was offering up thanks to Him whom the winds and waves obey, for having restored her brother in safety.

Fishermen, as a class, are marked by strong religious feeling. Recent events connected with the revival movement place this fact beyond all doubt. Nowhere have so many been "struck down" as among the hardy sons of the ocean, whose sturdy frames would seem to be an effectual barrier against such purely physical manifestations. But it is not so: men whose lives have been a constant struggle with the ocean, and exposed to daily danger in forcing from

it its hidden treasures—men whose physical frames, by habitual exposure and exercise, have attained something of the hardness and roughness of the granite which encircles their native shore—such men have proved the best material for supporting the belief of those who hold that the suspension of all the physical energies is the surest proof of the production of a great spiritual change.

Mr. Hamilton, from his first arrival amongst them, had striven to teach the fishermen of Loanhead that men daily exposed to death ought to prepare to die.

There was not a single family in the village which had not lost one of its members, while some had lost two or three; and there were a few widows, whose husbands and sons had all perished in the relentless ocean. As he visited their cottages, he would encourage them to tell the simple story of their sufferings; and then, when their hearts were opened up to him, he would try to sow the good seed; and though many rank weeds of superstition sprang up with the goodly stalks of corn, the harvest had, on the whole, been encouraging. They were

taught to recognize and to worship in their families Him who shall, one day, make the sea give up its dead, and bring back from its hidden depths the husband to the widow, the son to the childless mother.

Ninian's tale is told; the shadows of night have long closed around the fisherman's cottage, and nothing is heard without but the distant roar of the ocean breaking against the skerries in the bay. The big ha' Bible is reverently taken down from the shelf, and reverently spread out on the well-dusted table. A few verses of the 103rd Psalm are read aloud and then sung, all the members of the family taking part. Soldiers like to read of the battles of the Bible, and of its warrior kings, and sailors are fondest of those passages which treat of incidents connected with the sea. Stormy Jack's Bible opened most naturally at the 107th Psalm. It opened there this evening, and all listened with deeply grateful hearts, as he read of the dangers and deliverance of them that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters.

Here let us halt. Genius alone is privileged to enter the sanctuary, and to disclose

its hidden mysteries; after Burns it would be presumption for another to aspire to describe the devotions of the Scottish poor. Let us be grateful that, though his mantle has not descended upon another, the subject which inspired his muse may still be found in many a cotter's and fisherman's abode.

Next morning Ninian proceeded to Islay-head, to receive the money due to him for the voyage. He preferred the walk, which led along the sea-shore, because he wished to indulge his thoughts without interruption. He was now his own master. He had attained the great ambition of a boy—he was a man. He had gone forth into the world; he had done the work, and he was to receive the wages of a man. His manhood would be recognized in his native village; for a voyage to Davis' Straits was much the same among the youth of Loanhead, as the assumption of the virile *toga* in the days of ancient Rome. Being a man, he could exercise every manly right, and there was nothing precocious or presumptuous in the idea of marrying. All fishermen, he well knew, marry young, and he had attained

the average marrying age of his class. And whom should he marry but pretty Marion Leslie, whom he had loved as far back as his memory could extend? Had he not been in the habit of calling her his little wife, and had she not quietly acquiesced in that title? Had she not stolen down to the shore when he had said good-bye to all the rest on starting on his voyage, and given him her little Bible as a keepsake, and told him that when she said her prayers at night she would never forget him? She loved him then, as a sister might love a brother; she knew no other love.

But did she love him now well enough to be his wife? She had sprung up to be a woman during the nine weary months of absence, and he felt that the old feeling between them—a feeling the exact nature of which they themselves had never attempted to define—could no longer be the same. Marion had shown that she herself felt this. The reception she gave him was cold and constrained, compared with what it would have been a year ago. Was this constraint the result of maiden bashfulness

and reserve, or could some one have been tampering with her affections during his absence? He ran over the list of his acquaintance at Loanhead, but the result was satisfactory; he could recall no briny Adonis whose fascinations could be at all formidable.

Loanhead was so little visited by strangers, and Marion so seldom left it, that he at once banished from his mind the idea that some unknown rival had supplanted him during his absence. If she was cold and reserved, he felt that the fault rested as much with himself as with her. He also had undergone a change—he could no longer address her with the same familiarity as before. But gradually they would become more accustomed to one another—something of their old intimacy would return, and he did not despair of being able, in course of time, to win from her a willing consent to become his wife.

As yet he had met no one, but, on turning a point, he was startled by observing a human figure stretched out on the sand, close to the water-mark, about five

hundred yards from the spot where he stood. Among the fishermen it is esteemed unlucky to find the body of a drowned man; while, in their opinion, the most fortunate thing that can befall anyone, is to discover the body of a man who has hanged himself. So long as the rope with which the deed has been done remains in the possession of that man, or of his family, good fortune will be sure to attend them; while the reverse takes place on the discovery of one who is drowned.

Ninian shared sufficiently in the superstitious feelings of the class to which he belonged, to hesitate for a moment whether he should not imitate the example of a certain well-known sacerdotal character, and pass by on the other side. But his hesitation was only for a moment—his better feelings prevailed, and he hurried to the spot where the body lay. It was that of a man lying on his face, with his head supported by his arm. It was enveloped in a horseman's cloak, and beside it lay an old battered hat, which had evidently seen much service. It was evident at once to Ninian that

the man could not have been drowned, as his clothes were perfectly dry. The suspicion never crossed his mind that he could have met with foul play, for crimes of this nature are almost unknown among the class to which he belonged, and his first impression was that he must have fallen down in a fit, or been struck with apoplexy.

He hesitated for a moment, to consider whether he should not leave the body there, and hasten to Islayhead to procure assistance, but his curiosity overcame that feeling of repugnance which the young always have to touch the dead, and seizing the man by the arm he turned him on his back. He at once recognized the face. In truth, it was a face which, once seen, could never be forgotten. It was, unmistakably, the face of a soldier—and of a Scottish soldier. The rugged features and high cheek-bones marked his nationality; while the expression of martial sternness, even while he was asleep, would have proved him to be a soldier, apart from the black leather stock which he wore, and a scar which extended from the corner of the right eye to the

mouth, and divided the cheek into two parts. The fierceness of his expression was increased by a pair of shaggy eye-brows, and a long matted beard, which was snowed over with the colouring of age. A glance at the face shewed Ninian that he had stumbled upon old Stirling, once a private in the Life Guards, and now the sole instructor of the rising generation of Loanhead. The powerful odour of spirits exhaled by the old soldier, left no doubt but he had been indulging in deep potations, and had been overcome by liquor and sleep.

Ninian shook him roughly by the shoulders. At length he opened his eyes, stared around him with that stupid, meaningless stare which marks the first awakening from deep potations and sleep, and started to his feet. He drew himself up to his full height, and gave the military salute, as if he had been in the presence of an officer. This was a purely instinctive movement; and it is strange how readily a soldier will salute his officer, when he is too drunk to be capable of doing anything else.

On perceiving that he was not in the presence of one entitled to be treated with such honour, the expression of his face changed from respectful attention to fierce defiance, and, seizing Ninian with a grasp like a vice, he shook him roughly.

"What! you scoundrel, you thought to catch an old soldier asleep, did you? And you thought to rifle my pockets, without knowing that a '*vacuus viator*' like me can laugh at such light-fingered gentry as you? I would give you the whole quotation, but what does a soulless animal like you know about humanity or the humanities? Oh! man! I wish I had had the upbringing of you. My *ferula* and the tenderest part of your body would soon have been on terms of intimacy; and, by beginning at the right end, I would have taught you the distinction between *meum* and *tuum*, which you seem to have forgotten this morning."

This address was delivered with much gravity, and accompanied with sundry shakes, which were far from pleasant.

"Why, Mr. Stirling, do you not know me? I am your old scholar, Ninian

Kynoch. You surely do not suspect that I intended to rob you. I found you asleep, and only awoke you. I hope you are not offended."

The stern expression of the soldier changed to the nearest approach to a smile which his hard unbending features could assume, as he grasped Ninian's hand and shook it cordially.

"What! Ninian! '*dulce decus meum*' the cock of the school of Loanhead, the *facile princeps* in all those branches of learning which, as the Latin poet justly remarks, '*emollit mores nec sinit esse feros*,' suspect thee of robbing me! No, my lad, thou hast never robbed me, save of that intellectual wealth which it was my pleasure to impart, when '*professus meliora*' than the rude children of the village, you began your studies under my tuition. And grieved am I, Ninian, that your heart of '*triplex æs*' should have led you to plough the ocean, when you might have drunk deep of the fount of classic lore, and been a burning and a shining light in our National Zion, which has never been contaminated

by Erastian error, and has justly assumed as her motto, 'Nec tamen consumebatur.'"

"I am afraid, Mr. Stirling, that you have been drinking deep at some other fount this morning, or I should not have found you asleep on the sand."

"No, Ninian, no. The censure is unmerited. Your suspicions are unfounded—I am temperate as those Eastern sages who eat gram and drink water. True it is, and of verity, that such dietetics would not be altogether adapted to this cold northern cliine, where we are nine months of the year in mist, and the other three in snow. Moreover, Ninian, I am not quite what I once was. *Non sumus quales fuimus.* I may even say, '*quantum mutatus ;*' but there is no use croaking—I bear my bodily infirmities as best I may ; and if I do, at times, take a small drop, and am not altogether to be classed among the *potores aquæ*, a class I have always despised, I only do it for conscience sake, and not from carnal indulgence. But you mistake, Ninian, in supposing that I was asleep—I had only thrown

myself down on the sand to listen to the roar of the 'poluphloisboio thalasses,' (it grieves me, Ninian, that you have never learned Greek), and to indulge in such thoughts as the view of that vast image of the infinite must ever suggest. I feel hurt that you should have taken your old master to be nothing better than a '*porcus de grege Epicuri*,' or have supposed it possible that he could be '*vino ciboque sepultus*.'"

"Ah! Mr. Stirling, you can take drink, and you can make drink. Do you not remember the morning, when, after digging for some time in the foundation of your peat stack, I found 'the ewie wi' the crooket horn,' the pipe of the illicit still, with which you produced many a good gallon of whisky, without the sanction or knowledge of the Commissioners of Excise. And did I not——"

"Hush, Ninian, hush! There are certain subjects which ought to be spoken of with caution and reserve, and this is one of them. I have always been an advocate for the unrestricted liberty of the subject, and on more than one occasion made acquain-

tance with the cat-o'-nine-tails through conscientiously acting up to my belief. One of the worst evils of the Hanoverian succession was the imposition of a tax on malt; and on that point I have always been a stern Jacobite. If a certain personage were to dance away with every rascally exciseman in Scotland, there would be a double advantage. Every man could make his own whisky without saying by your leave, and no one could tell how many gallons were drunk every year. We should thus escape the taunts which our southern neighbours so freely indulge in, about our being the most drunken nation in the world. Much they know about it, with all their statistics!"

"But you must admit," said Ninian, as they continued to walk in the direction of Islayhead—"you must admit that the consumption of spirits is much greater in Scotland, considering the population, than in England."

"Ay; and what makes it greater? Those boosing English bagmen, who come north saturated with vile gin and viler

brandy. Our whisky tastes like nectar to them, and they can never have enough of it. I have seen an English bagman put more under his belt than any member of the ten-tumbler club. It is my belief that some of them do it to swell the number of gallons; and then, when they cross the Tweed, the hypocritical rascals begin to whine about the Scotch being the most drunken nation on earth. Scotchmen in England, on the other hand, have such a tender regard for the reputation of those among whom they live, that, to give them a character for temperance, which they do not deserve, they absolutely abstain from everything stronger than small ale."

"Did you never drink anything stronger when you were in the Life Guards?"

"Ahem!—I have always borne a high character for temperance, as the regimental books will shew. Still, a sacred regard for truth compels me to say that I have occasionally fortified myself with a dram before mounting guard at the Horse Guards. I have always been a man of a peculiarly modest disposition, and it required some-

thing unusually strong to guard my heart against the admiring glances which the nursery-maids cast upon my stalwart frame, as, mounted on my noble black charger, I took my stand beneath the archway. I may say. of more kinds of warfare than one, '*militavi non-sine gloria.*' "

"You must have seen a good deal of life in your time, Mr. Stirling."

"I believe you. I have been here, and there, and everywhere. I have tried my hand at everything, and succeeded at nothing. If you had told me forty years ago that I should settle down as the teacher of a few miserable brats in a miserable fishing village, I should have laughed you to scorn. But 'to such vile uses may we come, Horatio,' as the Swan of Avon has said or sung. I was intended for the Church; but I grew so tall, that few pulpits would have contained me, even if I had passed my trials. I once contrived to be introduced to a fair and witty duchess, whose influence in the north was very great. She looked at me with mingled surprise and admiration.

"'What is this young man intended for?'

"'Intended for the Church,' was the reply of the duke's commissioner, who introduced me.

"'Intended for the steeple, you mean!' was the immediate reply.

"The name stuck to me, and I was ever afterwards known at college as the 'steeple.' I daresay the duchess would have done something for me, for women like men who are witty, or who call forth their own wit—perhaps the latter class best of all.

"But I was not destined to adorn church or steeple. *Nolo episcopari.* I had never any great ambition for lawn sleeves or the Geneva gown, and a different face awaited me in life. *Tuyo color armis*—I preferred a red coat to a black, and a small accident connected with my early life, left me no power of choice. I have always had a weakness towards the fair sex, and I had more pleasure in admiring the blue eyes of Mary MacMurdoch, my landlady's daughter, than in listening to the prelections of Dr. Splutmergreek, or mastering old Peter Pro-

sody's unintelligible theory about the subjunctive mood. She used often to say to me—

"'Ah, laddie, hae dune wi' yer havers. It will be lang ere the corbie croup upon your kirk.'

"And she was the means of verifying her own prediction. Poor lassie! — I wonder if she is still alive? She was the toast of the whole college, and it would have been better for her and me if we had never met. Her fate lies heavier upon my conscience than the burden of all my other sins, and they are legion."

Hitherto he had been talking to himself, without paying much attention to his companion, but he now grasped Nimian roughly by the arm, and looked him sternly in the face.

"Perhaps you are laughing at any exhibition of feeling in an old, drunken, godless, graceless scoundrel like me; but know, young man, that—outcast as I now am, shunned and detested by all who value their good name—I started in life with as good prospects as any young man of my

age and condition. I was the son of parents who lavished on me many prayers, and who would gladly have submitted to any privation to reach the great goal of their ambition—to see their son 'wagging his pow in a poopit,' as they quaintly expressed it.

"Well do I remember the morning when I first left home to commence my studies at the distant seat of the university. I was anxious to see the world; and yet I had a sad presentiment of evil in my heart. My father—honest man!—recommended great care in spending my money, as any extravagance on my part would involve him in difficulties; but my mother was more hopeful—

"'Never fear, guidman — never fear; though ilka carle should crave anither, our Johnie sall be a minister.'

"What evil fate was it that led me to take lodgings with Mrs. MacMurdoch, when there were hundreds of other houses without the same temptation? We must all fulfil our destiny. When I found that I was in danger of occupying a far humbler seat in the church than the pulpit, I sold the few

books which I possessed, and contrived to find my way to London. There, at least, I could hide my diminished head, without the danger of having the finger of scorn pointed at me. I engaged as usher with a bankrupt butcher—who, having failed in ministering to the material wants of the community, discovered that his mission was to supply them with intellectual food. In fulfilling his mission, he, in his excess of zeal, rather overlooked the wants of the body; and, as I have always been blessed with an excellent appetite, I had no difficulty, one morning, when he was rather late, in devouring his breakfast as well as my own. Instead of complimenting me on my appetite, he was pleased to indulge in certain personal remarks, which I might well have borne; but when he launched out into abuse against the land of my birth, patriotism gave weight to my arm, and I felled him to the ground, as he had done many an ox. I left him to recover himself, and, without saying adieu, I launched forth again into the stream of London life.

"The field of letters is often the last refuge of the desperate. I entered it, not in search of fame, but of bread; I failed in obtaining either. I was cheated by those who employed me out of the few miserable pence to which I was entitled, and left to starve. I have walked the streets of London for long weary hours, cursing myself and the whole human race, and wondering why I was ever brought into the world. I might have starved, or drowned myself, if I had not met with an enterprising manager, who had just brought out the pantomime of Jack the Giant Killer, and wanted a giant. The piece was highly successful, and I flatter myself that my gigantic stature and *tours de force* had something to do with it. I was on a fair way to flesh and fortune, when an untoward event put a stop to my histrionic career. One night before a crowded audience, the diminutive cockney who represented Jack, to mark his contempt for giants in general, and for me in particular, went beyond his part, and bestowed a kick on a certain sensitive part of my body.

"This original stroke of humour was ad-

mirably adapted to the taste of the gods of the gallery, who loudly applauded; and not to be outdone in humour, I waited till the applause was over, and then returned the compliment with such vigour, that the destroyer of giants was precipitated over the footlights into the midst of the pit. Would you believe it? — the public had not the good taste to appreciate the joke, and, instead of shouting applause, shouted 'police!' I have never seen those representatives of law and order without being reminded of the words of our national poet,

" ' 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,'

and keeping, on purely esthetic principles, at as great a distance from them as possible. I did so on this occasion; and, disgusted with the public for not appreciating my humour, I renounced the worship of Thespis, and rushed from the theatre, where, in truth, it was no longer safe for me to remain.

"As I was dressed in that peculiar costume which is supposed to have adorned the bodies of giants in all ages, from the days of Goliath downwards, my appearance

in the street did not fail to create a certain sensation, and I soon found myself attended by a retinue more numerous than respectful. To escape their notice I took refuge in a public-house in Charles Street, Westminster, where I found a party of soldiers carousing.

"It required little eloquence to persuade me to enlist. If the devil had appeared before me that night *in propria persona*, and made me the same offer as he is said to have done to Dr. Faustus, I do not think that I should have said him nay. I then became a private in the Life Guards; and, though I say it myself, the King had not a smarter soldier in his service. But the day is advancing, and the ingenuous youth of Loanhead will already be craving for that daily supply of mental food which it is my pleasure and my privilege to impart to them. The story of my military career must be reserved for some more convenient occasion, as old Doctor MacBlatter used to say at the close of his sermons. Being an old pupil, you will doubtless honour with a visit that humble academy where you first studied the

elementary branches of knowledge under my tuition ; and I shall then have occasion to speak to you of a matter of far deeper interest to yourself than the adventures of an auld, drunken, donnert deevil like mysel. *Vade, vale.*"

With this sudden transition from the vernacular to the classical, the trainer of the rising generation of Loanhead took leave of his young friend, and hurried off in the direction of his school, where, for the present, we shall leave him.

Scotland is considered a highly educated country. Scotchmen at home and abroad boast of their parochial schools, and give all due credit to John Knox, who established them. And all honour and praise be given to the man of stern resolve, of high purpose, and of dauntless courage, who wrested from the grasping hands of the rude Scottish barons enough of the church's wealth to found those humble but useful seminaries, to which many Scotchmen, born in the lower ranks of life, are indebted for the first knowledge of their own powers, and the primary means of cultivating them. Far

be it from us to say a word in disparagement of the parochial schoolmasters of Scotland, who, like the coral insect, labouring unseen and unnoticed, are laying the foundations of future continents of intellectual wealth, by adding each one his mite to the common stock. But Scotland has in a great measure outgrown the parochial system; and, in large country parishes, where the parochial school is not in a central position, an open field is left for any adventurer who chooses to assume the *ferula*.

The village of Loanhead was too remote from the parish-school to admit of the children attending it, and the only instruction they had received for many years was at the hands of a decrepit old woman, whose infirmities prevented her from leaving her chair, and whose extreme poverty made her willing to accept such small sums as the fishermen of Loanhead chose to pay her—more, it must be confessed, from a feeling of compassion than of appreciation of the value of her services. About the time of her death the village was visited by

Stirling, who was travelling about the country in the humble but useful capacity of a mender of pots and pans, and other culinary utensils—accompanied by a woman of foreign aspect, who passed for his wife. He was, as may be seen from the few glimpses he has given us of his character, a man of sudden impulses; and, in the whim or caprice of the moment, he offered to undertake the office of schoolmaster, and to occupy the cottage of the old woman, which was then without a tenant.

Most people would have seen something ludicrous in the idea of a tinker turning schoolmaster, and would have hesitated before entrusting the education of their children to one whose antecedents were more than suspicious; but the fishermen of Loanhead were only too glad to accept the services of one who was useful to them in more ways than one. Their ignorance of his past history enveloped him with an air of mystery bordering on respect; and the Latin quotations, the fragments of his early education—borrowed chiefly, it must be confessed, from the *Delectus*—with which

he garnished his conversation, impressed them with the belief that he was a man of profound learning, whom the world had not treated over-kindly. Even his habitual drunkenness was pardoned and overlooked by a class among whom temperance ranks as the least valuable of all virtues, when it was discovered that he knew the secret of distilling the potent spirit which they loved "not wisely, but too well."

The proprietor of Loanhead was a nobleman of high rank, a distinguished statesman, known and respected in every court in Europe—a man of refined taste, aristocratic sympathies, and cold, repulsive manners. Occupied with affairs of state—swaying the destinies of empires—ruling in the cabinets of princes—what thought or sympathy had he to spare for the rough, half-savage race, between whom and himself he recognized no bond save the obligation on their part to pay him, through his factor, a certain annual sum? Whether they sunk into the lowest depths of degradation, or emerged into a higher life and civilization, was a question alto-

gether removed beyond the range of his thoughts and sympathies; and it was to him a matter of supreme indifference whether their children were taught by a decrepit woman or a drunken tinker. And yet it may be that, if he had given that time and thought to the improvement of the moral and religious condition of his own dependents which he expended in the vain attempt to uphold institutions which the world has outgrown, his life would have partaken less of the character of a splendid failure.

Thus Stirling established himself as schoolmaster of Loanhead, without opposition on the part of the landlord or the minister, who was Mr. Hamilton's predecessor. The latter gentleman, on discovering Stirling's true character, and the evil produced by his unlawful practices, did everything in his power to get him removed. He even appealed to the landlord, who referred him to his factor, and the latter refused to interfere. His influence with the parents was very great, but it was not so strong as their attachment to the

strong whisky which Stirling sold at half the ordinary price; and thus they had stood by him through good and bad report, and refused, on this one point, to follow the advice of their minister.

CHAPTER VII.

Ninian, after parting with the schoolmaster, continued his walk in the direction of Islayhead. Occupied with his own thoughts, and accustomed to such scenes from infancy, he thought but little of the precipitous, rock-bound coast along which the path lay; but a stranger could not have looked down from the dizzy height on the huge waves surging, and boiling and chafing, and dashing themselves against the huge masses of granite which restrained their fury, some six hundred feet below, without being struck with the wild and savage grandeur of the scene.

The north-east coast of Scotland is generally in keeping with the stern, rugged appearance of the interior of the country, and the hard, unbending character of its inhabitants. The sides of the precipices are scarred and furrowed into the fantastic

appearance of different animals, and hence the names which they have received. The coast is often as regular as the wall of a fortress, and in truth it is a fortress, reared by the hand of the Great Architect, to restrain the advance of the ever-encroaching enemy who is striving to regain his lost territory.

Nothing can be more bleak or desolate than the appearance of the surrounding country. In the distance may be seen the blue outline of the mountains that spread through the interior, but, for miles along the coast, nothing is visible but dark grey fields of clayey soil, intersected by stone walls of the same colour. There is not a solitary tree, or bush, or stream, to diversify the scene; all is cold, dark, and repulsive, and the spirit of adventure must have been strong in those ancient Norsemen who could leave their ships and establish themselves in such a land.

The situation of the town of Islayhead is so low, that the traveller does not see it till he is close upon it; but if he happens to approach it during the herring season, as it

is called, he will not require the aid of the organ of sight to warn him of its proximity. Another of his senses, the possession of which the inhabitants of Islayhead might well dispense with as superfluous, will give him due intimation of its proximity. His nose will be assailed by such villainous smells, that he might well be tempted to believe that he is approaching the field of some recent battle, where the bodies of the slain, denied the rite of Christian sepulture, have been left to rot and corrupt in the open air. And in truth he *is* approaching a battle-field, where war is waged, not by man with his fellow-man, but by the hardy fishermen against the shoals of herring which periodically invade the coast, and whose advent is hailed with far different feelings from those excited by the presence of the ancient Scandinavian rovers who once infested their shores and ravaged their villages.

The odour of herrings, during the process of evisceration and curing, is not exactly that which Messrs. Lubin and Perrin would select for the composition of a new and

delicate perfume; but bad as it is, its vileness is rendered still more intolerable by the presence of that peculiar odour exhaled by whale-blubber while the oil is being extracted. The unhappy traveller, while compressing his nostrils, and practically experimenting with how small a quantity of air life can be sustained, might well exclaim with Macheath,

> "How happy could I be with either,
> Were t'other dear charmer away!"

were it not for the internal conviction that the utterance of this or any other sentiment would put a stop to his sufferings, by the summary but somewhat unsatisfactory process of asphyxia. So he preserves a decorous and prudent silence, not even venturing to anathematize the sights and smells which assail him on every side, in such terms as his sensations would suggest, and hurries on to his inn, in the hope that he may there, in some measure. escape from the tainted atmosphere. His ideas of taking his ease in his inn are soon found to be vain and delusory—the powerful odour of eviscerated herring and boiled blubber

pursues him wherever he goes, and he is never at rest till he finds himself miles away from a town where life would be to him unsupportable.

The inhabitants of Islayhead had no sympathy with the sufferings of such visitors as necessity brought amongst them during the herring season, and attributed their complaints to pure affectation. Familiar with the odour of whales and herring from the moment of their birth, they not only became accustomed to the peculiar *bouquet* which the presence of these denizens of the deep imparted to their atmosphere, but were even in the habit of pitying those poor people who were compelled to breathe an air which had not the smallest *soupçon* of whale or herring in it. It was observed of the inhabitants of Islayhead, that their noses were larger, and their nostrils more distended than those of other men; and this unnatural enlargement of the organ of smell was attributed by physiologists to their violent and constant efforts to inhale the largest possible quantity of air at every respiration. Be this as it may, one thing

was clear, that the air of Islayhead, whatever effect it might produce on strangers, agreed with the inhabitants of Islayhead. A more hardy, healthy, hospitable race is not to be found from Maidenhead to John o' Groats; and they can boast with reason that, when cholera carried death and sorrow into other towns, it passed theirs by as sacred ground.

When Ninian reached Islayhead, he found himself in the midst of familiar sights, and sounds, and smells. The harbour was crowded with herring-boats, so closely compressed together that they formed a species of floating-bridge, by which the different crews could reach their own boats. They were emptied of herrings and men; the former were already in the hands of the eviscerators—the latter, packed as closely as their own boats, were reposing, after the toils of the night, in the neighbouring huts. The division of sexes seemed as unequal as in the city built by Romulus—with this difference, that while Rome was inhabited by men, the fair sex seemed to have taken exclusive possession of Islayhead. While

their fathers, husbands, and brothers are asleep, they are preparing the proceeds of their toil for the foreign market. The streets are almost deserted, and the children who are to be found in them, quitting their usual sports, and yielding to the general example, are amusing themselves by eviscerating and salting such small fry as they have managed to lay their hands upon.

Near the harbour is collected the female world of Islayhead. The population is tripled by the influx of strangers of both sexes from all parts of the north—the Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Shetland Islands, and the extreme northern counties, have all aided in swelling the floating population. They bring their blankets and their nets, and trust to Providence for the rest. The already overcrowded huts of the fishermen are still more crowded by the admission of these strangers, who often pay considerable sums for the privilege of extending themselves on the floor. While the population is tripled, the amount of accommodation remains unaltered; and the strangers of both sexes

are glad to gain the shelter of a roof beneath which they can throw their wearied bodies on the floor, and refresh themselves after their labours.

Parents anxious about the fair fame of their daughters would scarcely permit them to pass through such an ordeal, from which few can expect to escape unscathed; but the chance of earning as much in a few weeks as might otherwise be earned all the year round, is a temptation which many poor parents and daughters are unable to resist. The character of the women who engage in this species of labour is not generally very good at first; and it is certainly not improved by their residence at the fishing stations. The state of things just described may serve in some measure to explain the origin of that gross immorality which recent statistics prove to exist to such a large extent in certain of the northern counties.

The female world of Islayhead is busy around the gutting troughs. Readers of the silver fork school had better close the book at once; for not even the genius of the great

Wizard of the North could cast a colouring of romance over a gutting trough, and the most venturous imagination would not dare to conceive of a heroine eviscerating herring. These women have nothing romantic about them, as they stand here in loose, coarse wrappers, covered with scales and blood, and ply their knives with a skill and rapidity which the uninitiated would essay in vain to imitate. A duchess receiving the *beau monde* in her gilded saloons may, in an esthetical point of view, be a far more beautiful object than these unsophisticated daughters of the north, covered with a coating of scales, and, alas! too often redolent of whisky; but the followers of Jeremy Bentham would not hesitate to decide to which of the two the prize of usefulness ought to be accorded; and yet such is the perversity of human nature, that most females would actually prefer being duchesses—*mais chacun à son gout.*

Ninian's eye was accustomed to such sights, or he might have stopped to stare at the incarnadined figures glittering with scales, who stood around the troughs in

solemn silence, and, with a single rapid movement of their knives, prepared the fish for the process of packing. He was in quest of the owner of the "Arctic," who was also the owner of several fishing boats, and usually superintended the preparation of the fish for the foreign market. As he did not find him among the troughs, he went to his curing-house, where he found Baillie MacGabbie engaged in earnest conversation with an English traveller, and at the same time keeping a watchful eye on the movements of certain sturdy, strong-limbed girls who were carrying the fish in *creels*, and depositing them in small troughs, where they were seized upon by others, who *roused*, that is, arranged them in barrels, and sprinkled them with sea-salt. The baillie knew by experience, that, as these female labourers were paid by the barrel, it required his presence, his watchful eye and stern reproof, to prevent them from packing them loosely, or neglecting to sprinkle them with a sufficient quantity of salt.

Baillie MacGabbie was a self-made man. By dint of energy, *pawkiness* and frugality,

he had risen, from being a common workman, to a seat at the council-board of his adopted town, where he was considered one of the most distinguished orators of the day. His speeches could scarcely be regarded as models of classical composition, as they smacked too much of the Doric dialect; but fortunately his audience was not fastidious, and Islayhead was as proud of MacGabbie, as England is of Gladstone at the present day. In truth, some of the burghers of Islayhead, who had ventured so far south as to visit the metropolis, and had found their way into the House of Commons during a debate in which the leading speakers took part, returned home more deeply impressed with the superiority of their local orator than before, and said to their townsmen, with a sagacious shake of the head, "There's na ane o' them has the brains o' MacGabbie!"

MacGabbie, for so great a man, bore his honours meekly. He was not above his work or his position, and prided himself on delivering the best barrels of herring, as well as the best speeches, of any man in Islayhead.

He was a strong, rough, burly man, with a loud voice, and a red face, deeply indented with small-pox, and dotted with small fiery pimples, which the baillie's enemies (no public man is worth his salt who has not enemies) attributed to his deep and frequent potations. As Ninian approached, he discovered from the baillie's voice, that he was engaged in discussion with a stranger of some consequence; for the baillie produced his English, like his Sunday coat—only on grand and solemn occasions.

"So the Government have sent you all the way to Islayhead to inquire into its sanitary condition? Well, sir, let me tell you that the Government, in sending you upon any such mission, have indulged in a reckless and unnecessary expenditure of the public money, which I shall protest against and petition against, at the council board. You Londoners should take the beam out of your own eye before you begin to relieve your neighbours of the motes in their eyes. We are all just as healthy as we would wish to be, and few folk can say the same. (Ginze Joss, ye havreless limmer,

tak tent hoo ye pit doon the herrin'!)"

The last sentence spoken by the baillie was utterly unintelligible to Mr. Noakes, the English sanitary commissioner, who believed it to be a passage from some foreign author, bearing upon the point at issue between them.

"I admit the aptness of your quotation, but I cannot deny the evidence of my own senses. I have an argument in my own nose, more powerful than any that can proceed from your mouth. No man in his senses will assert that it can be conducive to longevity to breathe an atmosphere impregnated with the noxious exhalations from putrid blubber and decayed herring."

"Look at me, sir; I have lived in Islayhead twenty and three years, and I never had sore head or sick heart. Buy a few shares in our whale fishery, and the noxious exhalations will soon become more grateful to your sense of smell than the richest perfumes. You know the proverb, *non olet nummus*—our guineas do not smell of oil. Besides, sir, on public grounds, and as a public man, I should protest against any

interference with our present mode of converting blubber into oil, as all experience proves that the oleaginous matter contained in the atmosphere, when admitted into the lungs, is not only conducive to health, but even acts as a preventive against those infectious diseases with which other towns, less favoured, have been visited. Cholera, sir, respected Islayhead, and never dared to enter its sacred precincts. (Mair saut there, an' streek them closer thegether.) No, sir. We have never had a visit from cholera."

"I am not surprised," said the other, dryly. "I think the cholera showed great wisdom in leaving you alone. Those who can live in such an atmosphere as this are not likely to die of cholera."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the baillie. "You are pleased to be face*e*tious, sir. Well, well, every place has its own customs, and its own ways. We know how to manage our own affairs. We are not fools, more than Tocher's calf—it knew milk from water. We shall defer the discussion till we meet at my table this afternoon, as I have to pay my men, who will all be waiting for me at my office."

The baillie bowed to the stranger, with as much dignity as became a magistrate of the flourishing town of Islayhead, and walked off in the direction of his office—a small room on the ground floor of a house overlooking the harbour. The baillie was already expected. A small crowd of sailors and their friends was standing around the door — hardy, weather-beaten men, clad partly in trophies from the distant north, the proofs of their own prowess in contending with the savage beasts which are at times to be met with in the Arctic regions. Their wives and sweethearts, "helps-meet" for such hardy men, were waiting to receive such parts of their wages as were not already forestalled. In the background might be seen several men of sinister aspect, watching the proceedings with evident interest. Prominent among these was the attenuated figure of Adam Mackay, the miller, who was in the habit of advancing money to the seamen for their outfit, and waiting to be paid on their return. In this matter, Adam and his compeers scarcely acted the part of the good Samaritan; for every penny which they ad-

vanced to the sailor they exacted two on his return.

The baillie eyed these vultures with no friendly expression. He liked a good return for his money, but he would have scorned to obtain it at the expense of others. He was strictly just in all his dealings with those whom he employed, and no one could bring the charge against him that his was "ill-gotten gear." He knew the way in which the poor sailors were cheated of their hard-won earnings, and had tried to do everything in his power to put a stop to this system of usury; but habit was more powerful than precept, and the reckless improvidence of the sailors was proof against all his arguments and offers of assistance.

The baillie cordially returned the respectful salutations of his men, who followed him into his office; but when he observed Adam Mackay and others forcing their way in along with them, he gave way to the anger and disgust called forth by their presence:

"Ay, ay, ye are here, are ye? Foul birds scent carrion from afar!—and no doubt ye expect to get a rich feast! I wonder ye are

not ashamed to shew your faces here; but folk like you ken little aboot shame. Ye wad sell your souls for a sixpence, and rake hell for a halfpenny. How can ye expect to get ony guid from siller that should provide bread for the wives and weans of these poor men, who have risked their lives for it?"

"Ye need na haud your head sae high, baillie," said Adam Mackay; "or gie yoursell sic airs to men who are just as guid as yoursel'. Ye speculate in one thing, we speculate in another; if your ship went tae the bottom, ye would lose nothing, being well insured; but if these men went to the bottom where would our siller be? Ye are a 'sponsible man, baillie, but I do not suppose that ye would make it up tae us."

"Make it up tae ye!" said the baillie, wrathfully; "if it were not for the puir chiels themselves, and their wives and bairns, I would be heartily glad of it. Make it up tae ye! It will be made up tae ye wi' a vengeance yet, for grinding the faces o' the poor, and making their children eat the bread of sorrow. But if ye will prey upon the poor, it shall not be done in my presence,

nor shall my office be your banqueting hall. Out of this every man and mother's son of ye, or it will be the worse for ye!"

They fell back before the baillie's burly form and angry looks, till none were left in the room but the sailors and their friends. The baillie then unlocked his desk, and began to pay every man his due, accompanying the payment with such words of advice as he thought suitable to the occasion.

"What a set of gowks ye are, to risk your lives for the benefit of a set of rascals, who care no more for ye than ye care for the carcase of a whale after ye have got the blubber. There is an old saying, often quoted by my old dominie, Mr. Dinnasparem, '*sic vos non vobis*,' which, I opine, would be very applicable to you. But what is the use of quoting Latin to a set of haverels like you, who do not know your own interests."

"Ah! it's a grand thing the learning, baillie," said an old sailor; "it's a pity ye werena a minister."

"A minister!" said the baillie, with great

contempt; "and much good I would have done as a minister, if I had had a flock like you, who dinna ken your own interests in this world, or the next either. I wish I had been an auld chief, with the power of the gallows—I would have begun by hanging a' these rascals of usurers as high as Haman, and making your wives the purse-keepers."

"We a' ken, baillie, that your bark is waur than your bite. We maun e'en jouk, an' lat the wave gang o'er us. If we are ill guides o' oor siller, we hae to bear the brunt o' it oursels. Ye maun admit that we ha' worked weel for you. We hae brought some grist to your mill."

"I dinna complain! I dinna complain!" said the baillie, somewhat softened. "The corbies that pike your banes daurna wag their nibs at me, but it grieves me to see honest men like you working for the behoof o' a set o' rogues, who do not care a pinch of snuff for ye. If I had spent my money as ye spend yours, I would never have worn a gold chain, or paid you your wages this day."

"Ah, baillie, but it is na ilka body that has had your chance."

"Chance, man! Everybody has his chance in this world, if he knows how to profit by it. Ye would not have said that I had much chance when I left the braes o' Badenoch, some twenty years ago, a breekless Highlander, wi' eighteen pence in my spleuchan. My father only gave me a shilling; and, pointing to the south, the land of promise, pushed me out at the door by the shoulders; but my mother, puir auld body, hirpled after me, and when she shook hands with me for the last time, I found another sixpence in my loof. May the Lord bless her for that gift, for I never parted with it; here it is still at my watch-chain. I travelled eighty miles, and when I first saw the steeple of your kirk I had sevenpence in my pocket. I threw the penny over the bridge for luck, and made a vow that I would work hard, and never do anything to disgrace an honest name. I kept my vow, and the first twenty pounds I made I sent to my mother, and made her the proudest woman in all the clachan.

Talk of chances—every dog has his day, and he maun be a puir tyke wha hasna had a better chance than me."

Whether convinced of their error or otherwise by this chapter from his experience, the baillie's audience were too prudent to offer any objections, and contented themselves with the utterance of certain applauding expressions, such as could not fail to be pleasing to the magisterial ears.

"Ah! baillie, we a' ken ye have been a weel-doin' chield. There's few like ye."

Soothed by this adulation, the baillie opened the drawer where he kept his money, and paid to each man the sum which the captain certified to be due. He requested Ninian to remain after the others had left, as he wished to have a few words with him in private.

"Weel, Ninian, my lad, I have been hearing good accounts of you from the captain. He speaks well of your skill and steadiness as a sailor, and I know you have gotten more book lair than ever fell to my lot, though I am a baillie and a 'sponsible trader. I have been thinking of doing

something for you. You should give up the sea. It is weel enough for ne'er-do-weels, or for harum-skarum loons wi' mair banes than brains, but you are fit for something better. Now, I am needing a lad in my office to help me to keep my books and pay my men. Blood is thicker than water, and I would have preferred ane o' my ain kin; but I have naebody that's sib to me now, since my nephew Donald MacCuish got tired of the office work and 'listed in the Forty-second. The deil gang wi' him and a' the ill weather; if he is no sharper wi' his sword than wi' his pen, the King will have a bad bargain. But as I was saying, Ninian, I am willing to take you on trial, and if, after a few years, we are both pleased, I should have no objection to admit you to a share in the business. And let me tell ye, lad, that you will maybe never get such another offer in your life again."

Ninian, though somewhat taken by surprise, had sufficient presence of mind to thank the baillie for his generous offer. He stated that, in a matter of such importance,

he would not like to decide at once, and asked the baillie to allow him some time to think the matter over, and to consult with his friends.

"Ay, ay, lad! Think twice before ye speak, and look well before ye leap. Many a callant would jump at the offer at once, but you do well to consider till you see your way. When you have made up your mind, come back and let me know the result."

Thus the baillie and Ninian parted with mutual feelings of good-will.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ninian's mind was too much occupied with another subject to allow him to bestow much thought on the baillie or his proposal. Under ordinary circumstances, he could not have failed to be deeply gratified by the baillie's kindness, and the new prospects in life which it opened up to him; but at present he was under the influence of one master passion, which, like the rod of the Jewish lawgiver, absorbed every other. He had but one object in life, and if he could succeed in obtaining it, all other considerations were matters of little consequence. Sober, sedate people, who have never known the passion of love (if there are such), would have said that he was labouring under a mental hallucination; and if the honest baillie could have read his thoughts as he left his office, he might have repented of the preference he had shown,

and recalled his offer. Fortunately, however, the baillie was not possessed of the power of divining Ninian's thoughts, with which you, gentle reader, are gifted; for you know that all this time he was thinking of Marion Leslie; and we may further inform you that he was at this moment puzzling his brains what would be the most acceptable gift he could present to that charming young person.

What young man of generous character and devoted affection has not found himself in the same difficulty? Nay, where is the boy who has not spent hours of anxious thought before he could fix upon the most appropriate symbol of his budding affection? Apples and Everton toffy have sometimes given expression to feelings otherwise unutterable, but Ninian was beyond the age of apples, and unskilled in the art of reaching that all but impregnable fortress—a woman's heart, he thought again and again, as he strolled through the streets of Islayhead, "What shall I give."

It would not do. The more he thought of it, the greater were his doubts and dif-

ficulties. Meanwhile he found himself near the establishment of a certain Lazarus Levi, a member of the Jewish community, who, contrary to the usual instincts of his race, had wandered as far north as Islayhead. Men of profane mind and irreverent spirit have been bold enough to affirm that the lost tribes of Israel have been at length discovered in the inhabitants of the northern parts of this realm; and have laid much stress on the antipathy to pork, the strong sabbatarian feeling, and certain matters of practical ethics, as tending to identify the two races, and to prove their common origin. Be this as it may, the inhabitants of Islayhead did not recognize this erratic member of 'the tribe of the weary foot' as a kinsman, and failed even to render him that consideration which was due to him as a man and a brother.

He had now been some twenty years in Islayhead. No one knew where he came from, and no one asked. He entered the town a solitary wanderer, with all his wealth in the pack which he carried upon his shoulders. His gestures, his strange accent,

and his broken English, proved that he was a native of some foreign land. The old man (for he was already old) seemed to be alone in the world. He never spoke of his country, his religion, or his race. He shunned all social intercourse with his neighbours, and mixed with them only so far as his peculiar mode of gaining a livelihood rendered necessary. He was unscrupulous in all his dealings, drove a hard bargain wherever he could, and was habitually guilty of usury—a sin specially forbidden by his own law.

In personal appearance this stray waif of Judaism had none of the characteristics of his race. The dark hair, the tawny complexion, the black eyes, the beaked nose, the thick lips, and the prominent chin, were wanting. He was a little old man, scarcely five feet high, of robust frame, and fair complexion. His white hair flowed freely from under the old beaver which he constantly wore, over a dark brown coat, which, being originally intended for a taller man, dangled at his heels, and almost swept the ground. His features were rough and

massive, but not sinister in expression; while the face was lighted up with large, open, lustrous blue eyes. Such specimens of the Jewish race are not rare on the banks of the Rhine: the hard crust of Judaism is not proof against the assimilating influences of climate and association.

Lazarus was the only Jew in Islayhead. If he corresponded with his countrymen at all, the accounts which he gave of the land of his adoption were not such as to tempt them to follow him to the far north. Being the only representative of his race, he was looked upon with mingled feelings of dread and aversion, such as can scarcely be conceived by those familiar with members of the Jewish community. Children looked with terror upon one who, they were told, might mix their blood with his unhallowed sacrifices; and their parents kept aloof from him, as one of an accursed race, which had been guilty of an inexpiable crime.

On the door of his house was a plate with this inscription, "Lazarus Levi, M.D." The first appearance of this pretentious inscription excited the anger of the four

members of the Faculty at Islayhead, who thought they had a prescriptive right to the use of this title; and making common cause against their supposed rival, they called upon him to remove at once the obnoxious plate. Lazarus affirmed, with apparent good faith and sincerity, that he had no intention to assume their titles, or invade their field of labour; but only to point out, as was customary in the place, his own avocation of M.D., or Miscellaneous Dealer. The people of Islayhead, like their countrymen generally—notwithstanding all that Sydney Smith has written to the contrary—have a keen sense of the ludicrous, and understood this joke without the aid of a surgical operation. The public feeling was in favour of Lazarus and his door-plate, which remained the same as before.

A better designation than that of "Miscellaneous Dealer" could not have been selected by our friend Lazarus, as he dealt in everything, from a shoe-tie to a bride's *trousseau*. His dwelling was not adorned with the three balls which mark the avuncular residence; but it was understood

that, with the usual benevolence of his countrymen, he was ever ready to assist his neighbours with money—for a consideration. It must be admitted that these acts of benevolence scarcely tended to increase his popularity; but it has not been unusual for benefactors of the human race to be misunderstood and depreciated by their contemporaries. A striking trait in his character was his sympathy with rich young heirs, whose parents had not the good sense to leave this world when their presence was no longer desired. For all such he had ever a ready and helping hand, and, perhaps, his motives were on the whole as disinterested as those of other philanthropists, who tell us from day to day, in the advertisement sheets of the public papers, that they have discovered a cure for gout, rheumatism, toothache, and all the other ills that flesh is heir to, and are longing to impart their secret to others.

It was to the house of Mr. Levi that Ninian now directed his steps. He was undecided what gift he should give, and he knew that at the house of the Jew he

would have a larger assortment of goods to choose from than elsewhere. He knew, also, that Lazarus, from his reserved character and unsocial habits, would be less likely to disclose a secret, which, with all the maidenish bashfulness of a first passion, he wished to conceal. He felt instinctively that the object of his purchase would be at once divined by the shrewdness of the Jew, and his only hope was to be able to conceal from him the name of the party on whom it was to be bestowed.

He entered the room which Lazarus occupied as his shop, with something of a beating heart, and found him seated on a high chair, with his feet stretched out upon the counter. Ninian's first impression was that he was amusing himself by standing on his head, as little more than that part of his body seemed to rest upon the chair, and experimenting on the possibility of smoking a large meerschaum pipe in that uncertain attitude. The meerschaum was at once laid aside, and Lazarus emerged like a second Jove from the clouds which surrounded him, and prepared himself for business.

"Ah! mein goot lad. *Was ist Ihnen nöthig?* What is needful for you? What will you have? What is there of mine you wish?"

"Why, Mr. Levi," said Ninian, smiling, "do you not know me? Has one voyage changed me so much that you no longer know me?—or is it the tobacco smoke that keeps you from seeing me?"

"Aha!" said Lazarus, with alacrity, "I know de face, and I know de voice. It is de face, and it is de voice of Ninian Kynoch. *Er war immer ein gutes Kind*—a goot child, a goot child! Much bad childs here, dat hoot de old Jew man, and throw dirt at him. But Ninian is always a goot child. What can de old Jew man do for Ninian?"

This was a question somewhat difficult to answer, as Ninian wished to conceal the object of his gift, and felt that he could not well do so, if he specified it. He therefore faltered, blushed, and muttered something which was unintelligible. His embarrassment did not escape the keen eye of the Jew, who at once divined its cause.

"Aha! I see! I see! You hab come

back from sea with mooch geld in de burse, and mooch love in de heart, and you will take a little from de geld in de burse to express de love in de heart. And you want something from the old Jew to say to de loved one, 'Ich liebe dich'—I love you. I know—I know it all! Lazarus is very old and lonely now; but Lazarus also has loved. *Genug, genug!* What shall it be? I have bracelets and jewels brighter than those which Eliezer gave to Rebecca at the well. You shall see! You shall see!"

With these words Lazarus hurried Ninian into a back room, where, it is to be presumed, he kept his most valuable treasures. He drew from a dark corner a small iron-bound box, which he opened with a key attached to a chain round his neck, and proceeded to display to the admiring eyes of his visitor the glittering baubles which it contained. Each of these had its peculiar history, its special good points, and its fixed price, which Ninian found in every case to be very much beyond his limited means. On explaining to the Jew that something cheaper would be sufficient,

Lazarus carefully relocked his box, and, after reflecting for a moment, said—

"I have it. I bought it to give to Esther Eichmeyer, the fairest Jewess in Bremen, forty years ago ; but it was too late—she was betrothed to another. It is a locket of the purest gold. *Es ist wunderschön*—I love it still, for Esther's sake. But I will sell it to you very cheap, for you are a goot lad—a goot lad!"

The locket was examined, and approved of, and became Ninian's property. During the negotiation, Lazarus continued to indulge in a series of sly winks, expressive of his own sagacity and appreciation of Ninian's motives in making such a purchase, and accompanied them with broken quotations about striking while the iron was hot, and fair ladies never being won by faint hearts—all of which were lost upon Ninian, who was too much occupied with his own thoughts to bestow much attention on the Jew's disjointed talk.

Having secured the locket, he hurried off in the direction of Loanhead. The reader is, of course, aware who it was

intended for, as we are not of those cruel writers who torture their readers by keeping them constantly in the dark, and leaving it to the close of the third volume before a thread can be found to guide them from the mazy labyrinths in which they have been involved. We treat our readers with perfect openness and candour, and if any one of them has read thus far without falling asleep, he will at once divine that the locket was intended for Marion Leslie, the flower of Loanhead.

A declaration of love by a diffident or bashful lover is a more fearful and trying ordeal than a declaration of his political creed on the hustings by an unfledged legislator, amid the hostile shouts and unsavoury missiles of an unfriendly mob. His speech may have been carefully prepared, every sentence may have been duly weighed, every period may have been gracefully rounded, and the gesture and action appropriate to each part duly studied beforehand; but when the hour of his trial comes, an apple or an egg is sufficient to arrest the flow of his eloquence, and to reduce

him to mute, inglorious silence. In like manner, the lover, anxious to tell his love, may have clothed his passion with words of fire, and learned to recite them with a tenderness of tone and speech which none but a heart of adamant could resist; but when, with something of confidence, he has ventured on the sacred ground, one well-directed shaft of ridicule or sarcasm, shot from his mistress's tongue, suffices to drive him from the field, and to cover him with confusion.

Ninian was too simple-minded to think of making fine speeches, or studying elegant attitudes. He felt the necessity, however, of formally making known his feelings of affection, and began to consider what would be the most suitable occasion for this declaration. He would gladly have consulted his mother, or his sister Alice, but he was restrained, by his own timidity and bashfulness, from speaking of his passion to a third party, however closely connected with him. No one, except the old Jew, could as yet suspect the state of his feelings, which he had never divulged to any human being,

not even to the young maiden who was the object of his affection. But he now felt that the most important moment in his life had arrived, and that the crisis was close at hand from which he would date the commencement of his happiness, or have the miserable conviction forced upon him that all hope of happiness in this life was gone. If he could only gain from Marion the confession that he was not altogether indifferent to her, and that no one had anticipated him in her affections, he would take counsel with her as to his future course in life; and he felt that, with such a prize in store for him, there were few of the ordinary fields of labour in which he might not aim at and attain success.

With his mind full of these thoughts, he had walked along at a rapid pace, till he reached a jutting point in the coast, about a mile from Loanhead. He was all at once roused from his reverie by a clear, ringing, girlish voice exclaiming, "A penny for your thoughts!"

It was Marion Leslie, who, tired of the monotony of home, had stolen out

to enjoy a solitary ramble by the sea-side, without, of course, the smallest expectation of meeting Ninian in such a solitary place. She was close upon him before he observed her, and, struck by his air of abstraction, she had adopted this mode of address to attract his attention.

Now, if ever a favourable moment could have presented itself for the avowal of his passion, it was the present; for here was the object of that passion inviting him to disclose his secret on the solitary shore, beside the suggestive sea. Not that she divined the state of his feelings, when she offered a reward to know the subject of his reverie. Had she dreamed for a moment that she was the cause of that downcast countenance, and that air of abstraction, she would have shrunk from betraying, either by word or action, her knowledge of his secret.

Marion Leslie had never enjoyed the advantages of refined society, or of a superior education; but there are some minds possessed of an inherent refinement and delicacy of feeling, unaffected by the coarse

circumstances of their daily lives; as there are others essentially rude and vulgar, notwithstanding the gilt, enamelled surface which the varnish of fashionable education may impart. There has been many a duchess with a soul not above a milk-pail, and many a dairy-maid who, with a little training, might gracefully do the honours of a ducal residence. Marion Leslie belonged to the latter class—she was a born lady; but whether she owed this natural refinement of feeling to the gentle blood in her veins, or to other causes, we do not undertake to say.

The poet tells us that there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to victory. A very pleasant doctrine, if we could only know when and how to take it at the flood. But we are always mistaking the ebb for the flood; and instead of riding on the crested waves to the *terra firma* of success, we are always finding ourselves stranded on the barren shore of disappointment. Or when we feel that the right moment has arrived, we have not the moral courage to take advantage of it, till it is

past and gone for ever, when we stand idly by, lamenting our bad luck, when, in truth, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Ninian felt that now, or never, was the moment to declare himself. What more easy, the reader may imagine, than to throw himself on his knees, or to place himself in the attitude appropriate to such an occasion, and to protest, with all the fervid eloquence of a first affection, that she was never absent from his thoughts by day, or from his dreams by night; and that to gain her love he was ready to endure all the terrors of the Arctic regions, or to toil beneath the burning sun of the tropics?

So also might Ninian have imagined, if the fair enchantress had not stood there before him, to arrest the flow of his eloquence and to cause all his courage to evaporate. He pressed convulsively the locket in his hand, as if it possessed some occult power to open his lips, or to afford him relief in his trying position. But there was no help, a dumb devil possessed him, and he could not speak.

Marion observed his *mauvaise honte*, though

she never suspected the real cause of his awkwardness, and at once came to his relief, with that ready tact which distinguishes her sex in all ranks. She began to make some inquiries about his visit to Islayhead, and gradually directed the conversation to his recent voyage, and drew out the young sailor to speak of all that he had seen and suffered. The wonders of that distant ice-world caused him to forget himself, and to speak with an eloquence at which none would have been more surprised than himself, if he had been aware of it. His companion listened to him with silent admiration, and almost loved him, as Desdemona loved the Moor, for the dangers he had undergone.

They were now close to Loanhead, and, unwilling to part so soon, they seated themselves on an old boat which lay rotting on the beach. The sight of the sea, and of all the surrounding objects familiar to them since the first years of their childhood, opened up their hearts, and recalled old scenes and associations formerly forgotten.

They lived their childish years over again. Now they were children in the old boat,

carried out by the tide, till the land faded away into mist and darkness, and night, more dreaded than the ocean, came to envelope them in his shroud of darkness. Marion again slept through that long and dreary night, beneath a piece of old sail, while Ninian kept watch over her, and wiped away the tears which flowed freely when *she* could not see them. Again they felt something of the joy which thrilled through their hearts when the white speck, which they had been gazing at with wistful looks and doubtful hearts, became larger and larger, till they could see the brawny form of Stormy Jack, and hear his shout of joy as he waved his arm in recognition, and steered his boat to the rescue. They could still remember the womanlike tenderness with which he took them in his arms, and chafed their hands and feet, benumbed with cold, and rolled them in his rough coat, taken warm from his own body.

A thousand memories of the past, some solemn and tender, others of a lighter cast, came rushing over them, and dissolved the

barrier which time and absence had set up, till they found themselves conversing with something of the ease and freedom of former years. Ninian was again the manly protector who shielded her from every danger. He was even something more—for, mixed with the admiration of former years, was a feeling of tenderness, the consciousness of which was accompanied with a feeling of shame hitherto unknown. She knew, as every woman knows, through instinct or the odic force, it matters little which, that she was loved, and this knowledge gave rise to a feeling of joy which was new to her heart. It was a delicious feeling, which was reflected from all surrounding objects. That golden sunset had never seemed to her so gorgeous or beautiful, and the ocean itself seemed to express sympathy with her heart's emotions, as it broke in gentle ripples at her feet, and drew back again as if to do her obeisance.

These two souls were never so near one another before, and years of bitter sorrow and suffering passed before they were so

near one another again. If Ninian could have mustered the courage to say the two simple words, "I love," or to give the locket which he had bought as a *gage d'amour*, the shadow of those dark years now impending over them might have passed away. But every time he essayed to speak, his evil genius, or some other power, sealed his lips; and when he tried to stretch out his hand to present the locket, he felt that all virtue had gone out of him, and that his muscles were no longer responsive to his will, or that all power of volition had ceased.

The flood in the tide swept past them, and the golden opportunity was gone.

A rough voice, utterly destructive of all tender emotions, and breathing only of the earth, earthy, was heard to exclaim—

"Ho, ho! my turtle-doves! So I have caught you billing and cooing together!"

It was the voice of old Mackay, the miller. Marion started to her feet, and rushed off in the direction of the house, with the fleetness and gracefulness of a startled fawn.

The conversation between Ninian and his uncle must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

When David, King of Israel, heard that his first-born by Bethsheba was dead, he arose, and washed himself, and did eat bread. The reason which he assigned to his servants for laying aside all the paraphernalia of woe, and reverting to the habits of his daily life, are such as approve themselves at once to every sound understanding. His grief was useless and unavailing. It could not give life to the dead, or recall that which was lost: why, then, should he indulge in it? On this occasion he reasoned and felt like a philosopher; but, alas! after all, philosophers are but men, and, as such, subject to all the weaknesses incident to humanity. That same David who philosophically dried up his tears when he heard that his child by Uriah's wife was dead, was swept away by an irresistible torrent of bitter, unreasoning grief when he heard of the

death of another son. "The king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And, as he went thus, he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

We admire David the philosopher, but we mingle our tears with those of David, the bereft father, stripped of all his philosophy, and weeping as the merest weakling might weep. There are feelings in our hearts older and more sacred than all the teachings of philosophy, and woe to that man who, in the pride of intellect, or in obedience to a false system, shall strive to ignore their existence, or rudely repress them when they demand free vent from the anguished.

Alas, for the house of Inverchewan! Its pride and its glory are gone. By one rude shock the fair fabric of future greatness, all resting on one basis, has been overthrown and crumbled into dust. Young Harry Leslie is dead, and with him has died all

that was brightest and dearest in life to his father and mother.

The poor laird was most to be pitied, because there was nothing to divert the current of his grief. Mrs. Leslie had her household duties to attend to, and, unconsciously, these roused her from that dull, heavy, silent grief which had overpowered her husband. It was true that she was daily, and almost hourly, reminded by some familiar object connected with her son of the great loss she had sustained—but the frequent recurrence of any sensation tends to weaken its force; and so it was with the intensity of her grief. Besides, she could unburden herself by talking of her lost one to those friendly neighbours who called to offer their sympathy and condolence.

With the poor laird the case was very different. He spoke to no one of his loss, and repelled all sympathy. He avoided all intercourse with his neighbours, and remained for hours moodily silent. He treated his wife with all the tenderness of which his dull, undemonstrative nature was capable, but it was observed by all that a

great change had passed over him. He seemed to have lost all interest in life: the living was taken from him, and the dead failed to console him. He sought in vain for comfort among the departed Leslies. Those grim faces looked down upon him, from their dingy, mouldering frames, with something of a stern, reproachful expression, which seemed to say, "The Leslie race is now extinct. This man had a son. That son might have handed down the name of Leslie to future ages if he had been taken care of. But now he is dead, and why should we be here? Destroy us before we fall into the hands of strangers. Let our name and our memory perish."

The laird almost dreaded to be alone in his picture-gallery. He no longer gazed upon those familiar faces with the same interest as before. The link between him and them was snapped. The silver cord of his existence was broken, and henceforth life was to him dull, flat, and unprofitable. He was not a man of much imagination, but even that faculty began to play him strange tricks. In the long evenings, in

the following winter, he could sometimes hear the pattering of little feet upon the stairs, could hear again the crack of the little whip, and the sound of the boyish voice which was once the music and charm of his existence. All our passions are strengthened by solitude, and grief is no exception. Weeks had elapsed, and his sorrow knew no abatement—it flowed on like a deep, slow, sluggish stream, which makes no great noise, but which cannot be diverted from its course.

Mr. Hamilton had visited him repeatedly, and when the utter prostration occasioned by the first announcement of the accident had passed away, strove to direct his attention to those precious truths whose healing influence is never so much felt as in our hours of sorrow. These visits could scarcely be pronounced satisfactory. The laird listened with apparent attention and respect to all that was said, and sometimes signified his assent by such expressions as, "It is very true, sir," or, "I hope to meet poor Harry in a better world."

But Mr Hamilton could not conceal

from himself the painful fact that the consoling truths of religion had no power over his mind. They excited no interest, such as they must ever excite when they are fully realised. No feeling of aversion or opposition was ever shown, but the anxiety with which he hastened to change the subject for one more congenial to his usual habits of thought and feeling, proved that "he cared for none of these things."

With Mrs. Leslie the case was far different. With all a woman's faults, she had also that deep tenderness of nature peculiar to her sex, which drinks in, instinctively as it were, the waters of life in hours of great sorrow and suffering. The great tie that bound her to life was gone. It might be truly said that she lived in her son; and she received, with all the craving tenderness of a bereaved mother, the doctrine that that life should be renewed in another world. Her motherly sorrow gave her a dignity of character which she had never before exhibited, and attracted more sympathy than the stolid silence which the laird preserved.

She tried to assist Mr. Hamilton in consoling her husband. But while the latter was respectful enough to the accredited minister of religion, he showed no inclination to receive in a docile spirit the teachings of his wife. He had been so long in the habit of contradicting her, that he could scarcely refrain from questioning the simplest and clearest truths of religion when spoken by her lips. This he could scarcely do in the presence of the clergyman, without offence; but he avenged himself for this enforced silence by his captiousness and peevish opposition when alone.

"Na, na, Maggie," he would say; "dinna ye set up for a religious teacher, Paul kent best, and nae doot he had his ain reasons for saying that women should haud their tongues aboot religion. Maybe he had a wife o' his ain, puir man, and kent what husbands hae to thole frae their wives' tongues. Nothing that you can say will ever bring back my own poor little Harry, or lighten the burden of his loss, so I maun e'en bear my sorrow as best I may. 'Every

man must bear his own burden,'—there is scripture for you, and sound sense besides. And, oh! Maggie, my life is a sair burden now. It is hard to think that the bonny barony of Inverchewan, out-feedle and in-feedle, moors, and pasture land, should a' gang to the fremd. I am the last o' my race now, Maggie, and when my auld banes are laid in the yird, Inverchewan will pass into other hands, and the auldest county family be extinct."

Thus the laird refused to be comforted, and thought in the bitterness of his heart that there was no sorrow like unto his sorrow. He brooded over his misfortune in gloomy silence, and time, the great consoler, seemed only to deepen the intensity of his grief. Mrs. Leslie tried every expedient she could think of to divert the current of his thoughts into other and healthier channels, but all her efforts were in vain. He hugged his sorrow to his heart, as if it were something too sacred ever to be parted with, and said, mentally, with a sort of dogged fatalism, "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

At length Mrs. Leslie bethought her of an expedient, which, she hoped, would have a soothing influence upon her husband. It was long before she could reconcile herself to the adoption of it; and the self-sacrifice which it involved was something more than she would ever have dreamed of before sorrow had shed its chastening influence upon her. But there is no sacrifice which a woman will not make for the sake of the man she loves; and Mrs Leslie did love her husband, notwithstanding those slight differences which tend only to fan the flame of nuptial affection. Much of that love which was once bestowed upon her son, now reverted to her husband as its legitimate object, though candour compels us to say that it would be difficult to specify the particular quality which served to elicit or retain this affection.

She now watched for a favourable opportunity for submitting her plan to the laird. One day he had been confined to the house by a slight attack of illness. He was not a man of great mental resources. He had, perhaps, never read a whole book in his

life. His highest intellectual effort had been to spell over the local gossip in the county paper, and to retail it among his tenants and dependents. But, unfortunately for the poor laird, the county paper appeared only once a week, and the day of publication had not yet arrived. He tried to console himself with the last copy, and to excite a factitious interest by reading accounts of gigantic turnips, prolific cows, and hard contested ploughing matches. He ran his eye repeatedly over the births, deaths, and marriages, and, in utter despair, tried even to dip into the foreign intelligence. Soon finding himself beyond his depth, he floundered back the best way he could, and, after reading all the advertisements from beginning to end, he threw aside the paper with an exclamation of disgust. He then betook himself to walking up and down the room, till, tired of this exercise, he was glad to throw himself into his easy chair. He was not a man of great conversational powers, and his wife was the last woman in the world before whom he was at all anxious to display them, but he felt it a sort of relief

when she broke in upon his silence by remarking —

"Laird, do you never think of your brother Frank?"

The laird looked at her at first with a half-puzzled air, as if he did not quite understand the question, and then answered it *more Scotico* by asking another —

"What gars ye speer?"

"It is a natural enough question. There is Frank, your only brother, has been missing ever so many years, and no one can tell whether he be dead or alive—though he is more likely to be dead, in my opinion."

The laird was much of the same opinion, but he was one of those self-respecting husbands who would consider it a compromise of their own dignity to give an unqualified adhesion to any idea which originated with their wives.

"Wha cares for your opinion? Chiels like Frank hae a hantle o' killin' in them. The smugglers left him for dead, ance or twice, but he aye cam' roun' again. I saw him ance tumble down the Corbie Craig when he was harrying the hoady-craw's nest; ony

ordinar' lad would hae been dashed tae pieces, but Frank escaped wi' a few bruises nae worth mentionin'. When the 'Barracouta' gaed down, Frank was the only officer that escaped in the boat; and when the boat was swamped, he was the only man who reached the shore. It is my opinion that auld Eppie Foreman, the witch — wha was his nurse afore she saul hersell tae the deil, and took tae sellin' winds and spaein' fortunes—gaed Frank a charm, and as lang as he wears it he will never be drooned. I ance saw it when he was asleep, and I had the curiosity to look at it. It looked like a little gowd watch, and inside there was some hair. Ye ken that witches aye play their cantraps wi' hair."

"I'll warrant," said Mrs. Leslie, "it was some other witch than Eppie Foreman who gave him that locket with the hair, and it will require a stronger charm than that, laird, to keep off death when our hour comes. There was no charm could save my Harry, my own bonny boy, that is now sleeping in the dowie kirk-yard, and I the

mother that bore him am still alive."

And here the poor mother turned aside to conceal her tears. The laird said nothing. He had no comfort to offer, and no tears to shed. His was a deep-settled grief, which could find no outlet by tears.

"Aweel, Maggie, it is done, and it canna be helpit now, so we must e'en submit as weel as we can; but what gars ye think aboot Frank? Ye hae nae mentioned his name for mony lang years."

"Did it never occur to you, laird, that if Frank should ever turn up he would be heir to all the lands of Inverchewan, which are strictly entailed?"

Now this idea had never presented itself to the laird's sluggish intellect, but he was the last man in the world to allow his wife to suppose that she could see any subject under any aspect which was not already familiar to his own mind. At present, however, he felt himself in some little difficulty. He had just avowed his belief, not from conviction, but contrariety, that his brother bore a charmed life, and must, therefore, be alive; and he was now ashamed to confess,

what he truly believed, that Frank had been dead for many years. He had long banished from his mind the idea that he could ever appear to claim the lands of Inverchewan; but as he had just expressed a different opinion regarding his brother's tenacity of life, he thought it better to preserve a prudent silence.

"It is true that he has been a rash, reckless-living man, and it is more likely than otherwise that he has come by a violent end; but, still, we do not know. We have no certainty that he is dead, and he may still turn up at some unexpected moment. He was never in the habit of writing to us on former occasions, and he may be living in some foreign land, where there are no means of forwarding letters as in this country."

"Aweel, Maggie, there is no use havering on a subject when, by yer ane confession, ye ken naething about it. Frank may be alive, or he may be deid, but there is ae thing quite sure, and that is, that nae ane will get haud o' the lands o' Inverchewan till I am deid mysel! And I am no' deid yet, nor deid-like."

Here the laird indulged in a faint smile, but whether evoked by the consciousness that his life was an obstacle in the way of all aspirants to the lands of Inverchewan, or by the idea that he had presented the subject in a light in which the more limited mental vision of his wife would never have enabled her to perceive it, we cannot undertake to say.

"I hope it will be many a day before Frank or any other will take your place at Inverchewan. I hope I shall never live to see that day. But have you never thought of Frank's daughter, who will inherit all his rights after his death?"

A dark shadow of displeasure passed across the laird's face; the subject to which his wife alluded was evidently a disagreeable one. He had refused in any way to recognize his brother's daughter as a member of the house of Inverchewan, and though, on the whole, a kind-hearted man, he had never contributed anything to her support. In truth, Stormy Jack and his wife were so much attached to the little orphan who had been entrusted to their

care from the moment of her birth, that they would have scorned to accept relief from any of her more wealthy relatives.

"Ay, an' a bonny heiress to Inverchewan she'll mak'! But I am no' so sure about her succeedin' to the lands. I hae my ain doubts whether Frank was ever married to her mither. He was aye a terrible chield amang the lasses, and cared little for ministers or marriage ceremonies. He never tauld me onything about his marriage, and if this lassie had been begotten in a lawfu' way, he surely would have done something to provide for her upbringing, and no' left her dependent on the charity o' puir folks like the Kynochs."

"I have spoken to Mr. Hamilton about the marriage, and he says there can be no doubt but everything was done as it should be, for there are witnesses still alive who were present. It would have been heartless of Frank to desert his poor little motherless bairn, but, you remember, he disappeared about the time of her birth, and no one has heard of him, or from him, since that time.

The Kynochs are honest folk, and well spoken of in the quarter; the lassie will have learned nothing bad from them. If our own little Harry had been spared, she might have been left in their keeping, and no one could have blamed us for leaving her in charge of her mother's relations; but it has pleased Heaven to remove him to a better world, and now her position in life is very much altered. There is a duty which we both owe to this orphan girl; we must try to educate her for her future position in life, or her altered circumstances will prove a curse to her instead of a blessing."

"Hoot, noo, Maggie, nae sae fast. Hoo am I to ken that this lassie is sib to me? She may be neither kith nor kin to me for onything that I ken. Or even allowing that Frank is her father, and that she was born in lawful wedlock, what have I to do with her? Ye maun hae a bee in your bonnet to speak o' me educating her! I never got muckle education mysel', and I am owre auld now to turn dominie to a young hizzy, wha aiblins kens little mair than to count a fisherman's dozen."

"I am afraid, laird, that she would not improve much under your tuition. But that is not my meaning. If we cannot educate her ourselves, we can at least pay for others who can. Let us do what is right and just in the matter. Let us send for Mr. McWyllie, your own man of business, and submit to him the proofs which Mr. Hamilton says he can produce of her legitimacy. No one is better able to judge in such a case than Mr. McWyllie, who, like my father, honest man, could solve all Dirleton's doubts over a double tumbler of toddy. If he pronounces her Frank's lawful daughter, there can then be no doubt but she is your heir; and I am sure, in that case, that you would wish her to receive such an education as would fit her for her exalted position."

"Aweel, Maggie, I'll neither mak' nor men' in this matter. It is o' your seeking, not mine. Mr. McWyllie will be here on Monday aboot the renewal of some of the leases, and, if ye like, ye can ask Mr. Hamilton to meet him, and to bring the papers with him. If the lassie be my

niece, we must just mak' the best o' a bad bargain. Blood is thicker than water. We have done little for her as yet, and we must try to make up for the past."

Thus it was agreed that Marion Leslie's claims to legitimacy should be submitted to the decision of Mr. McWyllie, writer, Islay-head, "the langest headed chield in a' the county," as our friend the laird, in his familiar vernacular, justly termed him.

CHAPTER X.

We left Ninian in company with old Mackay, the miller. There was little sympathy between the young man and his miserly uncle. Avarice is one of those passions with which the young generally have little sympathy; and the love of money was so powerful in the breast of this old man, that it blended with all his words and actions. The existence of this passion never fails to impart a kind of cynicism to the character, highly distasteful to the young, whose feelings and affections have not yet been blunted by rough contact with the world. The companionship or conversation of his uncle was an honour of which Ninian was far from being ambitious at any time, and his society was peculiarly disagreeable to him at the present moment, because he had interrupted his interview with Marion, and prevented

him from bringing matters to a conclusion.

Something of this feeling must have been apparent in the expression of the young man, for it was observed by his uncle, who associated depression of spirits with only one cause—the loss of money—and proceeded to offer his nephew such condolence as he deemed suitable to the occasion.

"You look rather downcast, Ninian. I am afraid that wheedling, old rascal, MacGabbie, has not given you a fair share in the profits. He likes to keep his ain fish-guts for his ain sea-maws, and looks at baith sides o' a shilling before he'll part with it. If he wants a pairt, it is no' the greedy pairt, and a bane is aye weel picket afore his teeth hae done wi' it. But I understand money matters better than you do, and, if you place your claim in my hands, I'll see that you get justice."

"I have no complaint to make against the baillie, uncle. He has done me every justice, and shown me more kindness than I had any right to expect at his hands."

"Then I suppose you will be anxious about a good investment for your money.

If you place it in my hands I'll take care of it for you. Money is hard to earn, and should be weel tentit. You'll no gang and spend it amang brewster wives, or in buying gewgaws that are o' no use to your-sel' or ony other body."

"No, uncle," said Ninian, with a slight blush; "the brewster wives will get little grist from my mill. I intend to take lessons in navigation for some months, as I find that I can never rise to be a mate or a captain without some knowledge of it, and the money will be useful to me in buying books and instruments."

"Hoot, awa, man!" said Adam, "that would be a puir investment. There is no' a buik in a' my house, except, maybe, an auld almanac or a tattered Bible, and yet I ken hoo to haud my ain as weel as my neebors. An ounce or twa o' mither wut is worth a' the buiks that ever were printit."

"All the mother wit in the world, uncle, would not teach you to navigate a ship."

"I am no so sure aboot that. I mind weel on the first ship that was startit from Islayhead for the whale fishing. Saunders

Craig, the captain, kent naething aboot compasses or chronometers, but he kent the road to Davis' Straits and back again as weel as he did frae his ane hoose to Luckie Macinlay's public—a road he kent owre weel, honest man. But though Saunders likit a dram ashore—nane better—he wud never taste a drap at sea; an' weel do I mind when his ship rounded the pier head, loaded wi' blubber and oil till she was like to sink. That was a proud day for Islay-head. The owners gave Saunders' wife the brawest silk goon that could be bought wi' siller, and the provost cleekit oxters wi' her when he steppit on board the ship. And wha' but Saunders, or Captain Craig as they now ca'd him! He was the greatest man that day in a' Islayhead. The provost an' the town-council tried to embrace him, but he was slippery wi' oil, and slid through their fingers like a greased pig's tail. After walth o' compliments, the provost, he says to him, says he, 'Captain Craig, I hope you have found your nautical instruments quite correct?' 'Oh ay,' says Saunders, 'I dinna complain. They hinna fashed me,

and I hinna fashed them; I was owre busy looking out for whawls and squawls ever to look at *them*.' The provost thocht he was jokin', but Saunders was never mair serious in his life. So you see a man may be a guid sailor, though he kens little aboot navigation."

"I have heard, uncle, that Captain Craig went many voyages to the whale fishing, and always came back safe and successful; but when his owners sent him with a cargo to Holland, where he had never been before, he lost the ship and his own life."

"Ay, they never came back, and Saunders may be the Flying Dutchman for aught I ken or care. But wha was yon bonnie lass that started up frae your side like a scared mawkin? Yon was Marion Leslie, if my auld e'en dinna' deceive me. Aweel, young folk maun hae their daffin, an' ye micht gang farther and fare waur."

Ninian felt all the bashfulness of a young lover at being thus closely pressed, and in order to create a diversion in his own favour, said—

"I wonder that you have always re-

mained a bachelor, uncle. Were you never in love?"

He had no sooner put the question than he was sincerely sorry at having done so. A great change passed upon the old man, his stooping figure became erect and rigid, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes sparkled with kindling passion. His heaving breast and the twitching muscles of his face, showed that he was labouring under some strong emotion, which he strove in vain to repress. It was so unusual for him to show any strong feeling, except where money was concerned, that Ninian was at a loss to know what there could be in such a simple question to excite so much emotion. The old man usually spoke the quaint Scottish dialect peculiar to his native place, but on this occasion the intensity of long-suppressed passion gave something of unwonted dignity to his language and bearing.

"You ask me if I was ever in love? Ay, boy, such love as you have never known—as few men know. If the greatest pleasure in life is to believe that you love

and are loved in return, surely life's greatest bitterness is to find that you have given your love to one who is unworthy of it. There is no bitterness like the awakening from that sweet but short-lived dream. Better to have died in that delusion than to have awoke to find it was a dream. With that awaking the magic charm of life is gone, and the only thing worth living for is revenge. Ah! revenge is sweet!—sometimes, I think, sweeter than love; but it is so long since I loved that I cannot tell. You find it hard to believe that this miserable, shrivelled old body could ever have been the seat of a great passion. Sometimes I wonder at it myself, and think that I must have lived two lives, and that I cannot be the Adam Mackay who pledged his troth to—to—— The cursed name has never passed my lips since I discovered that she was false. And why did she give me up? Was it for one who possessed a single claim to her favour which I did not possess? But I forget. He *had* a superior claim—he was richer than I; not richer than I am now, but richer than I was then.

So gold won the day, as it ever will and should when skilfully used. She became his wife, and I became what I now am. I discarded all other idols, and made gold my god. Pleasure is but a poor thing when compared with gold. I schemed, and planned, and toiled for gold, because gold alone could procure me revenge. I waited and watched, and spun out my web like a spider, till at length I caught my fly. He rotted and died in the debtors' jail, and she died of a broken heart. It was the sweetest moment in my life—a moment which compensated for all my past misery, when I stood by her bedside, and reminded her of her broken vows, and told her how I had lured on her husband to ruin. It was worth a lifetime to see the look of terror that gathered on that wasted face, which was once so fair, and her helpless shrinking from one who gloated over her misery as the richest banquet he had ever tasted."

There was something of the lurid fire of insanity sparkling in the old man's eyes as he uttered these words, which Ninian could not hear without a feeling of horror. He

had hitherto been accustomed to look upon his uncle with a feeling of pity, as one who was the victim of an all-absorbing passion; but he now appeared to him like a demoniac, into whom other evil spirits had entered. He was too young and too good to feel anything but repulsion at the exhibition of such a dark spirit of revenge. He had never suffered any great wrong to elicit any such feeling. The traditional doctrine of forgiveness, so beautifully embodied in the One Great Life, appears to us so natural and easy, till we receive some rude shock from the world, which destroys for ever our faith in our fellow-men, and makes us feel how difficult, how god-like it is to forgive.

"Oh, uncle!" said Ninian—"you make me shudder. How could you feel any pleasure in seeing a person die? I never saw anything die but our collie dog, and Marion and I cried for a whole day when they told us that he would never live again. I do not think that I have any enemies, but if I had one who had done me the greatest injury that can be inflicted by one human

being on another, I do not think that I could stand by his bedside as his spirit was about to return to Him who gave it, without saying, 'I forgive.' And then you know the words of our own paraphrase—

> 'As we to others mercy shew,
> We mercy beg from heaven.'"

"Mercy beg from heaven!" the old man repeated mechanically, as if the words were familiar, but the idea which they expressed unintelligible. "Mercy!—I have never shewn nor asked for mercy. An eternity of bliss, such as I have heard speak of when a boy, would be a poor compensation for that one moment of revenge. There is not a day passes but I recall the scene, and it never palls upon me by repetition. I see her at this moment as she shrunk from me, as if I had been a reptile or a beast of prey, when I put my mouth close to her ear, and said, 'I have brought you to this, and you know the reason.' She did know the reason, and the memory of it will haunt her for ever. Mercy!—what had I to do with mercy? Did she shew any mercy to me when she wiled my heart from me in pure

wantonness, and then trampled on it as if it had been a vile thing?"

"Uncle, I think you live too much alone. I have heard Mr. Hamilton say that all our passions are strengthened by solitude. If you mixed more with your fellow-men, these dark thoughts would pass away, and with your money you could do so much good."

"Good! what good is there in this world? The only real good is revenge and power. Money is power. Money cannot make you young, or ward off sickness and death; but so long as you do live, money can do almost anything else. Look at me now—I am covered with rags; it was only the other day that a stranger threw me a copper. But old, withered, and ragged as I am, I am the happiest man in the parish. All feel my power, and all bow before me. If I were a beggar, they would spurn me from their doors, but they all cringe and fawn upon me—because I am rich. I am not a marrying man, but if I thought of taking to myself a wife I might have the pick and choice of the whole parish. A braw young

lover! you think. But gold is the true elixir of life—it rubs out the wrinkles of years, and smooths the furrowed brow of age—it pours the incandescence of youth over the decrepit frame, and gives wooers of seventy the advantage over love-sick youths of twenty. Ah, I could almost forgive a woman now for preferring gold to love; for love soon pales and dies, but gold remains. When I look at my money-bags, I feel that I possess potentially children, and houses, and lands, well-stored cellars of the richest wines, the daintiest dishes that ever tempted the palate of the epicure, and the greatest pleasures which the heart of man can enjoy. All these I possess, because I have money, and money can purchase them all."

"There is one thing, uncle, which money cannot buy, and that is love—love alone begets love."

"You have not much money, but you believe yourself rich in love; a common delusion with youth. You love, and you think you are loved in return—and so perhaps you are, after a fashion. But will that love stand the ordeal of success, or survive

the sudden elevation to rank and wealth? She whom you love were more than a woman if she were not intoxicated with the sudden change. Go and tell her of your love when that change is effected, and she will only smile a bitter smile of pity and contempt, at the presumption of the sailor lad who dared to make her the object of his maudlin passion."

Ninian's face blushed crimson with anger and shame, but, by a mental effort, he retained his self-control. His uncle eyed him askance, to watch the effect produced upon him by his words.

"I do not understand what you mean; it is true that I love, but she whom I love is in the same position of life as myself; there is no presumption in my loving her, and there is no chance of her being exposed to the temptation you mention. If, however, it should ever happen, and she should treat me, as you say she would, I should have no cause of complaint, as I have never won from her the confession that I have not loved in vain."

"Ah!" said the other eagerly, "that is

the very point I wish to speak to you about; there is very little time left, and all your hopes depend on the use you make of that time. You love Marion Leslie—I can read your passion in your eyes, your blushes, and your confusion. I know the symptoms of old, and one does not forget them in a hurry. Well, you are standing at this moment on the shore, and she is drifting from you out to sea—so fast, that if you do not plunge in and boldly overtake her, she is lost to you for ever."

"Uncle, I do not understand you—you speak to me in parables. What change has occurred in Marion's prospects to make it presumptuous or improper for me to love her?"

"I do not say that it is improper for you to love her—love is not a question of proprieties, it grows up we know not how. But perhaps you do not love her after all; it may be only a boyish passion, as transient in its nature as all boyish passions are."

"No, uncle," said Ninian earnestly, "I have never spoken of this subject to anyone but

yourself. You seem in some way to have discovered my secret, and to have some object in directing our conversation to it. I know it is usual in these cases to deny the truth, but I wish to be candid and open with you—I *do* love Marion Leslie. I cannot tell you when I began to love her, because I cannot recall any period of my past life when I did not love her. My love for her seems to be part of myself, to have grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength. My imagination has never painted a picture of which she did not occupy the foreground; I have never cherished a dream of future happiness apart from her, and yet I have never told my love; so that if she were at this moment raised to rank and wealth, and refused afterwards to listen to my suit, I should have no just cause of complaint."

"Do you love her very much?" said the old man, with a cynical look.

"I think—nay, I am sure—that I would willingly die for her."

"And what would you do if she were

taken away from you and made a lady, who would never dream of marrying a sailor?"

"My happiness in life would be gone; but I could not blame her. It is a higher power that forms our position in life, and we must all submit to its decrees."

"There is an old saying, and a very true one, 'Heaven helps those who help themselves.' When you jumped overboard the 'Arctic,' the decree was that you would have been drowned, if you had not struck out bravely and made for the shore. Strike out in the same way now—the land is not yet beyond your reach, but, if you hesitate, you are lost."

"Explain yourself."

"Have you not heard that young Harry Leslie, the laird of Inverchewan's only son, has been killed by an accident; and do you not know that Marion Leslie is the nearest heir to the estate, which is strictly entailed? The Leslies have hitherto shown little love for the lassie; but their pride will not allow them to leave her longer in a fisherman's cottage. They will be sending her

to one of the fashionable boarding schools, to learn the accomplishments suitable to her rank. Our gentlefolks cannot get on now-a-days without a little of the English accent, a smattering of French, and a few tunes on the piano."

Mackay spoke these words more to afford him an opportunity of watching his youthful companion, than that he attached any peculiar meaning to them. On observing that he became deadly pale, he made no demonstration of sympathy; an expression of satisfaction might have been traced in his repulsive features.

"Ah! lad, I see how the case stands! You love Marion Leslie, and you have forgotten that she has gentle blood in her veins. That mattered little, so long as she was a penniless lass, with nothing but her own good looks for a tocher. But the heiress of Inverchewan will soon be beyond your reach. There is no time to be lost. In a few days she will be as much beyond your reach as if she had ceased to live."

The poor lad looked like one beside himself. He felt much as Alnaschar must have

felt, when the contents of his basket lay scattered in fragments at his feet. The basis on which he had reared the fabric of his future happiness, was swept away by this sudden announcement, and he already felt the bitterness of one bereaved. He felt staggered by the suddenness of the blow, and looked at his uncle with such an expression of helpless despair in his face as might have awoke some sympathy in a less callous breast. He could not collect his thoughts—he could only catch at the smallest ray of hope which promised deliverance from the dark dungeon of despair into which he found himself suddenly plunged.

"Uncle, what can I do? I cannot urge any claim upon her. She is not betrothed to me—I have never told her that I loved, or asked her love in return. I am nothing to her but the companion of her childhood. When she leaves our house, it will no longer be my home. I must go forth into the world, and try, by change of scene, to forget the past, but I can do nothing to prevent her from leaving me. I cannot rejoice at her

good fortune; but at least it shall never be said that I stood between her and it."

"The heiress of Inverchewan will not want wooers; and you would stand tamely by and see her the wife of another? I always thought you a lad of some spirit, but I find I have mistaken your character. You had better go home at once and make your obeisance to the young heiress. Who knows but she may exalt you to the honours of flunkeydom, and permit you to display your calves behind her carriage!"

The shafts of sarcasm could not reach the young man. He was so absorbed with grief that he scarcely heard the words of his uncle, and the words which he did hear conveyed no definite idea to his mind. He may, perhaps, appear unmanly when we say that he wept, but he had not been trained to believe every exhibition of strong feeling a solecism in manners; he belonged to that unsophisticated class who laugh when they are merry, and sigh when they are sad. He lifted up his voice and wept as he said—

"Oh, Marion! my own Marion! lost to me for ever!"

Mackay watched his emotion with the same interest as a butcher might exhibit in the last convulsive movements of a young calf into whose heart he has just plunged his knife. He thought that he was now sufficiently prostrated by grief to listen with a favourable ear to the proposals which he had intended from the first to make.

"Dry up your tears, man—dry up your tears. Tears are for women, and deeds for men. If Marion is lost to you for ever, it will be through your own folly. I have been thinking of a scheme which might make you laird of Inverchewan, and give me ample revenge for the foul trick which one of the Leslies played me many years ago."

"I care nothing for the lands of Inverchewan, and will do nothing to aid you in your dark schemes of revenge. But why should these Leslies, who have taken no interest in her before, come now between me and my love?"

"Ah! lad, there is a difference between

the heiress of Inverchewan and Frank Leslie's tocherless bairn. Few cared for the latter, but the former will get wealth of suitors. I tell you again that the only chance you will ever have is slipping through your fingers, and, unless you bestir yourself, it will be gone for ever."

"What can I do?"

"I will tell you. As yet she knows nothing of her altered prospects—she still believes herself to be an orphan, cast off by her father's relations, and dependent upon your family for support. It is for our interest that she should remain in this state of ignorance till our plan is executed. What I propose is, that you should marry her secretly; such marriages are not uncommon, though religious people profess to set their faces against them. The lassie can have no great objection to it, as her own father and mother came together in that way; and when the thing is done, you need care little for what people say. People call me miserly hulk, scrape-hell, and a thousand other ugly names—but I look at my money bags, and smile at them."

"But, uncle, I have heard Mr. Hamilton say that he disapproves strongly of secret marriages."

"Ay, ay! Very likely. The miller, you know, is always opposed to what does not bring grist to his own mill. If he was to try his hand at such marriages, he would have the Presbytery down upon him. But the Kilbaudy minister is just now in this neighbourhood, and little he cares for the General Assembly or the Presbytery. For half-a-crown I will get him to bind you as tight as a hangman's knot, and I should like to see the Leslie that could separate you then. You cannot cast up one another's kin, for the same blood is in both your veins; and the blood of the Mackays is as good as that of the Leslies, notwithstanding the laird's havering about his ancestors, who were just honest cow-cowpers, and as good judges o' nowt as any man in all the country-side. You have only just to put the question, and get the lassie's leave, and leave the rest to me. A bottle or two of whisky will keep old Kilbaudy quiet till we have got everything arranged. I do

not like to part with my siller, but I would give a pound or two to see Inverchewan's face, when he finds that his heiress is married to a son of John Kynoch, the fisherman of Loanhead."

The old man chuckled, so lively was his conception of the laird's dismay, on his making this discovery. As to Ninian, the poor lad's brain was too confused to enable him altogether to comprehend the scheme when first brought under his notice. His first feeling was to embrace any proposal which promised him his heart's desire, with all the eagerness of a drowning man clutching at a plank, and he said hurriedly,

"But how can I expect that Marion would ever consent to such a plan, when I have never even told her that I love her?"

"Ah! lad, I have thought of that too. You believe, no doubt, that ruddy cheeks, and sparkling eyes, and fond speeches find the readiest entrance to a maiden's heart, but I know better. Gold is the magic key before which they all fly upon. Make your proposal with the air of a lover who counts upon success. Tell her that I have made

you my heir, upon condition that she consents to become your wife. Tell her that I have strong reasons for wishing that the marriage should be secret. Show her some of my money, which I will lend you, to prove that what you say is true. Promise her the finest silk gown in all Islayhead for her marriage dress—for all women worship finery. Plead your cause like a man, and her heart must be different from that of other women if she refuse you."

Meanwhile, the young man had time to comprehend his uncle's scheme, and to perceive that it was dictated by other motives than a regard to his happiness. He could not regard it in any other light than an act of villainy, from which he shrunk back with instinctive repugnance. He had been brought up in the simple faith of his forefathers, and taught to shape his conduct by the teachings of the Book. He was the son of parents who were comparatively poor, but who were as proud of their fair fame as the noblest in the land.

While his heart felt the bitterness of the sacrifice which the assertion of principle

during this great trial involved, his sense of duty rose superior to the selfish desire of present happiness, and he felt that even Marion Leslie would be too dear if bought at such a price. He had never been taught to do evil that good might come, but rather to avoid the very appearance of evil. He could not look up for the blessing of Heaven upon a match contracted under such circumstances; and what could he appear in the eyes of her of whose youth and inexperience he had taken advantage to hurry her into a marriage, while she was yet ignorant of her altered prospects. Such conduct might appear justifiable to a miserable old cynic like his uncle, but the world at large would judge it by a different standard. He would carry down with him to the grave the memory of such a deed, and his conscience would never cease to reproach him for having yielded to a temporary weakness, and allowed his passion to gain the mastery over his principles. No, with the loss of Marion Leslie, his brightest dreams of future happiness might be dissipated, but at least he should have a conscience void

of offence, and the world should never be able to point the finger of scorn at him.

These thoughts passed so hurriedly through his mind, that he was almost unconscious of their presence, or of the influence they exercised in the formation of his decision, for which his uncle had not long to wait.

"No, uncle. I love Marion very much, but I had rather lie this very day fathoms deep beneath the waves of the German Ocean than marry her in the way you propose."

"Well, well," said old Mackay, with an air of impatience, mingled with contempt; "I have said my say, and you may e'en do as you like. You had better think the matter over; second thoughts are sometimes best, and you will not get such a chance again. Heiresses are scarce in these days, and well looked after. I'll keep Kilbaudy beside me for a day or two, and if you change your mind you can let me know."

With these words old Mackay turned on his heel and left him.

CHAPTER XI.

We all know, dear reader, that the yielding to evil, even in the smallest matter, is accompanied, at an after period, by a feeling of sorrow and regret; but have we never experienced a passing feeling of regret when we have met and overcome some temptation, and, by a strength greater than our own, successfully bidden it away? "The grand old gardener and his wife," no doubt, felt remorse as the gates of paradise closed on them for ever, and the flaming sword warned them never again to approach the scene of their former happiness; but would they have felt no regret if they had resisted the tempter and refused to taste the forbidden fruit? Would there have been no hankering after that which was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise? Have *we* never felt any such hankering? Have *we* never been

tempted to believe that we have been righteous overmuch? We may never have shown such a feeling to the world, but in our heart of hearts have we never repented that we have done well, and thought, with some one of old, "that in vain have we cleansed our hands, and held fast our integrity"?

"What false morality!" I hear some one exclaim; "what a degrading view of human nature!"

Well, brother, I am not speaking of thee. Thou art doubtless virtuous, and thou hast found that virtue is its own reward. Be it so; we are not writing of thee, but of a poor lad, who was anxious to do well, while he felt that to do well involved the sacrifice of his own happiness.

There was no feeling of regret at first. He had done that which was right, and he felt in his breast that warm glow of self-applause which we are ever apt to confound with the approving voice of conscience. Marion Leslie was lost to him, that was certain, but he was not lost to himself; he had been true to his own better nature, and though life would now be something dif-

ferent to him from the pictures his imagination had previously drawn, he could not be altogether miserable. He had the "*mens sibi conscia recti*" within himself; and perhaps, after a time, amidst change of scene and different associations, he would learn to bear this great sorrow with submission, if not with cheerfulness. He felt that for a time he must go forth into the world and strive to forget the past; or if that was impossible, to escape from the presence of those familiar objects and scenes, all of which could not fail to recall powerful memories of the past.

He would bury his secret in his own breast, and though he would not stoop to tell a lie, or to assign a false reason for his sudden resolve, he would tell his father that very night that he was about to undertake a long voyage. The captain of a Liverpool vessel engaged in the China trade was at that moment at Islayhead, and intended to ship as many sailors from his native place as were willing to undertake the long voyage. Why should he not go with him? His father had never opposed his wishes,

and his mother, a sailor's wife, would bear his absence as well as others of her class. To be sure, Alice—poor, sick, suffering Alice—the gentle and the tender-hearted, who looked down upon his boyish follies with such looks of love as an angel might bestow on erring mortal, erring in things where he felt no temptation—it was hard to leave Alice when he might never see her again; but better that than to be ever before her with a heavy heart and a clouded brow, adding to her sufferings by a secret sorrow which he could not tell. Yes, he would leave his native village, perhaps the next day.

His mind gained strength from this resolution. The path of duty was clear, and he asked for strength to be enabled to walk in it. He found the path of duty hard, but he had been taught that the path of transgressors was harder still. He had hope in himself, and in the healing influence of time. He hastily brushed away the tears which were still lingering on his cheeks, and turned his face in the direction of that home which he was soon about to leave.

On entering the house he found things much the same as usual. Alice was sitting by the window occupied in reading. Mrs. Kynoch was preparing the family meal, and Marion was engaged in spinning. He could hear the "thrum" of her "muckle wheel" before he entered the house. The contrast between the conflicting emotions which agitated his breast, and the peaceful scene before him, made a deep impression upon his mind. He felt all the loneliness of his grief. An hour or two before, he was as happy as any of them, but now he stood apart from them; he had a burden on his soul which he could not cast off—a sorrow which he could not divulge. Our inward emotions give their colouring to the outward world, lighting it up with brightness and joy, or casting over it the dark pall of sorrow and despair; but we cannot mould our fellow-men into harmony with our own passions, and their aspect of happiness and enjoyment jars upon our feelings, and makes them appear to us selfish and cynical.

If such a thought passed through

Ninian's mind, it was, of course, very unreasonable, as all were ignorant of the change which his conversation with his uncle had brought about in his feelings. His entrance created no sensation—all appeared too busy to notice him. He could thus indulge in his own fancies without interruption, and he felt a kind of gloomy satisfaction in the thought that none as yet knew except himself what a change would soon be brought about in this quiet household. Alice, dear, gentle, suffering Alice, would soon cease to suffer. Marion would be lost to them for ever, and he—where should he be? It mattered little, he could almost say, "anywhere, anywhere, out of the world."

Meanwhile, Marion seemed careless of all things past and present, save the work in hand. She sang like a blackbird and spun like Penelope. She unconsciously threw herself into the most graceful attitudes as she advanced and retreated, and as she at times stopped to unravel her thread when it became entangled, displayed an arm which, though browned by exposure, might

have served as a model to a painter or a sculptor. Occasionally she burst into snatches of song, for it was as impossible for her to refrain from singing as it is for my canary to arrest that flood of melody which he is at this moment pouring into my ears, to the no small detriment of the continuousness of my narrative. Now the air would be lively, and the words descriptive of herself—

> "Blythe, blythe and merry was she,
> Blythe gaed she but and ben;
> Blythe gaed she to her bed,
> An' blyther rase she up again."

Or, changing the air, she would sing with a half coquettish, half bashful air—

> "When ye gang to Buchan to woo,
> Gang bonny and braw, gang bonny and braw."

"Ay!" he thought bitterly, "you will soon have wooers enough, and I shall be forgotten."

He could not keep his eyes from her; and as he watched that graceful form, and gazed upon that young face, so fair, and yet so unconscious of its beauty, he felt his former resolutions melting away like snow before

the sunbeams, and the coils of temptation closing again around him. The hankering after the forbidden fruit, which he had refused to touch, came back upon him, and he felt something of that remorseful feeling which, as we have said, sometimes follows our best actions, when they involve any great sacrifice of our immediate enjoyment. Had he not been too scrupulous in refusing his only chance of happiness? How would others have acted in his place? It might not yet be too late—he would reconsider his decision—it was hard to give up all, and to go forth into the world a houseless wanderer.

He hurried from the house with his brain on fire, and his heart throbbing with the wildest emotions. He tried to pray, for he felt the power of evil within him and around him, but the words that rose from his lips sounded like mockery in his ears. He felt that they did not reach beyond himself—that there was a dark wall between him and heaven. He felt that his prayers could not be heard, because there was a secret craving in his heart that they should

not be heard. He rushed through the fields like a madman, striving to quell the raging passions within by the violence of his bodily movements. There was a pressure upon his brain, which seemed to weigh him down to the earth, and in his agony he struck his forehead fiercely with his clenched hands, and shouted aloud that fearful shout which no human being ever utters till reason is overthrown.

How long he remained in this state was never known. When reason partially returned, it was already night. He was lying in a field of ploughed land, where he had remained for some time in a state of unconsciousness. He felt so miserably ill and weak, that it was with difficulty he could raise himself to his feet. He looked around him in every direction, but failed to discover where he was. His clothes were soaked with water, and his limbs benumbed with cold. Though his reason was still clouded, he had a kind of instinctive feeling that he must seek for shelter somewhere; and when he perceived a glimmering light at some distance, the same instinct which

made him seek for shelter, led him in that direction. He was so weak that he often stumbled, but at length he reached the door, fell heavily against it, and fainted.

The night was already pretty far advanced, and it was fortunate for Ninian that all the family were not gone to bed. The house was inhabited by old John Norrie and his family. John occupied a small farm, which he and the other members of his family cultivated with their own hands. He was a rigid Seceder, and an office-bearer in the Secession Church at Islayhead: a tall, upright, stern, unbending old man, one of that class who, in former days, repulsed the rude shock of the dragoons at Drumclog, and took to the hills when they could no longer worship, as conscience dictated, in their once peaceful homes.

A man to be feared and respected was old John Norrie, one who reproved vice wherever the monster showed its "hideous mien," and brought up his family according to the strictest principles of the sect to which he belonged. But an enemy had come and sown tares with the good seed: his

eldest son, Alexander, while still a youth, belied all the promises of his boyhood, and took to courses which all but broke the old man's heart. Unwilling or unable to submit to the restraints of home, he had run away, about two years ago, and since that time his father and mother had only once heard from him, when about to sail from Liverpool on a long voyage. Though absent he was not forgotten; and every evening, when all knelt together, there was a tremulous tone in the old man's voice when he prayed for those that go down on the great waters in ships. His own family affliction had enlarged his sympathies; his prayers previously were almost confined to the prosperity of his own little sect, which, as he thought, embodied almost all the truth vouchsafed to man; and he left those who were "without" to shift for themselves as best they could. But when the old man spoke of the great waters and the ships, all knew that he was alluding to his eldest born, whom he could not mention by name, for fear of betraying emotion which, however natural, would have been regarded by

him and the other members of his sect as a weakness.

The family prayer was ended—the last cadence of the evening psalm had died away—it was already past the hour when John and his wife usually retired to rest. They still lingered by the turf fire, which had nearly burned out, and the flickering light of the lamp with its rush wick shewed the old couple sitting on each side of the hearth, in a half stooping position, with their faces bent over the ashes. Neither spoke; but they instinctively knew that they were both thinking of their lost son. From tenderness or delicacy, neither, for a time, spoke of him by name; and, when old Janet at length broke the silence, she felt that he was so much in both their thoughts that she need not mention his name.

"It is just twa years this verra nicht syne he gaed awa', puir lad. He has seen mony a fremd face syne that time."

"Ay, Janet, well may we say 'Ichabod!' —for our glory is departed. The reed that we leaned on is broken—a warning to us both. 'Put not thy trust in man.' We

have suffered much, but he must have suffered more. 'The way of transgressors is hard.'"

"Oh, John, say naething against our ain bairn. There is nane o' us perfect, ye ken, and maybe there was some faut in his upbringin'. Wha kens but we may be to blame oursels?"

And the mother's tender heart began to overflow.

John moved his chair beside her, and laid his large, brown, horny hand kindly and gently on her shoulder.

"Dinna greet, Janet woman, dinna greet. It is the Lord's wull, an' we maunna repine. I sometimes think that I was a wee ower strict wi' the lad; but it was a' for the best. Nane lo'ed him better than I did; and, oh! Janet, I hae spent mony a sleepless nicht syne he gaed awa, wrestlin' in prayer, like Jacob at Bethel. Little did I think, when I cam' hame frae my wark in the evening, and the wee thing held oot its arms and cooed like a cushie doo, wi' gladness to see me, that I would ever live to see the day when I wad wish to

see him beneath the yird. But we are baith auld and frail, Janet—we canna be here lang, and we'll meet ane above" (he reverently raised his bonnet) "wha is dearer to us than Sandy."

"I hope so, John; but oh! my heart is sair set on my bairn. Oh! if I could only see him ance afore I dee! Maybe he'll come back some day yet, like the prodigal——"

At this moment they heard the fall of some heavy substance against the door. They both started to their feet, and, seizing the lamp, hurried to the door, where they could see, by the imperfect light, a young man in a sailor's dress stretched across the doorstep, in an apparently lifeless condition. Janet's motherly heart, full of one idea, jumped at once to the conclusion that her prayers had at length been heard, and that this was the long-wished-for return of the prodigal. If she had been a woman of weaker nerves she might have fainted, but women of her class are never known to give way to a weakness which is always regarded by them as a sort of luxury belonging to their superiors. On the con-

trary, she hastened to assist her husband in carrying the prostrate form into the kitchen, or parlour, where they laid it on the *dais*, or wooden couch, which is to be seen in most of our humbler Scottish homes. They soon were painfully undeceived of their first impression, that their son had returned; but this good old couple had too much of the spirit of their Master to hesitate for a moment in affording the stranger all those kindly offices necessary to restore him to animation. They chafed his hands, and sprinkled them and his face with cold water—they loosened his neck-tie and his shirt, and poured down his throat a glass of whisky of such superlative strength as might almost have given life to the dead. The effect of these restoratives was soon evident. The patient began to breathe faintly, and the colour gradually returned to his cheeks—he opened his eyes, but there was no expression of returning reason in them. He stared wildly around him, like one haunted by some painful impression of which he could not divest his mind, and gave incoherent answers to the questions

addressed to him by his hosts, who soon perceived that his illness arose from other causes than exhaustion brought on by exposure and fatigue.

They searched his pockets, but they contained nothing to enable them to identify him. His wet clothes and incoherent remarks seemed to warrant the conclusion that he had belonged to some vessel which had been wrecked on the coast, and that his brain had received some injury when he reached the shore. These kind-hearted people resolved to do everything in their power for the suffering stranger. One of their sons was roused and despatched to Islay-head, which was about seven miles distant, for the doctor in whose skill they had most confidence. Meanwhile, their patient was stripped, and placed in the only vacant bed, the old couple watching by his side.

Towards morning the doctor made his appearance. The fishermen on the east coast of Scotland have an irresistible tendency to bestow nicknames on their familiar friends and acquaintances. They have all been baptized at one period or

another; but there is no exaggeration in saying that many of them are ignorant of their Christian names, and know themselves only by those *sobriquets* which the ingenuity and humour of their friends have bestowed upon them. So true is this, that strangers, visiting their villages in quest of particular persons, have addressed them by name, and found that they denied their personal identity, till circumstances were brought under their notice which convinced them that they were themselves. This want of self-recognition results not from any peculiar dulness of intellect, but from the universal prevalence of nicknames, bestowed at an early period in life, and kept up to the hour of death.

The doctor was familiarly known as the "Liverer," not from any tenacity of life which belonged to himself, or from any peculiar power he possessed of preserving that gift in others, but from an incident which befell him in connection with one of the most important organs of the human body. It was in the early days of his practice at Islayhead that this incident oc-

curred. The doctor's *ménage*, in those days, was conducted on the most economical principles, and the use of butcher's meat was rather the exception than the rule. On one occasion he had attended a patient, who died of some unknown disease. The lower classes in Scotland, and especially the fishing population, have a strong prejudice against the dissection of the human body, and the doctor had great difficulty in persuading the friends of the deceased to allow him to ascertain the cause of death. At length, however, he succeeded, and finding that the liver was at fault, he surreptitiously carried off that organ, for the purpose of subjecting it to the examination of some of his brethren. On reaching home, he handed it over to the care of his wife, remarking that she had better take charge of it, as rather than lose it he would lose his dinner.

By some train of reasoning, the good woman arrived at the conclusion that the doctor had provided her with the *matériel* for to-morrow's dinner. The rest may be left to the imagination of the reader. A

few days after he surprised his wife by the question—

"Where is my liver?"

"Your liver!" said the poor woman, in painful surprise, for she began to suspect that her husband was mad.

"Yes, my liver. The liver I gave you three days ago. I want it."

"Well, you have got it. You had it for dinner the day after. You cannot eat it twice."

"Heaven forbid!" said the doctor, fervently. He kept the secret from his wife, but he was too expansive, when in liquor, to conceal it from others. It came entirely within the range of that species of humour which was most enjoyed by the not over-refined population of Islayhead, and it was in commemoration of this incident that he had received the *sobriquet* by which he was generally known. No one would have ventured to address him by this name, for the doctor was a hale old man, with a hot temper and a muscular arm, but, when absent, he was known by no other.

The doctor was seldom drunk, but he

was never exactly sober. He was usually what his friends called "haflins," a term probably identical with the golden medium of Aristotle. Even at this early hour, he had rather a powerful odour of whisky, derived from his matinal potations, for he never ventured out without fortifying himself against the cold misty morning air.

No one thought the less of the doctor, because, to use the local phrase, he liked a dram; the practice was too generally prevalent among all classes to excite special notice or remark. The consciousness of our own defects makes us throw the mantle of charity over the failings of others, and the doctor's fondness for the bottle was regarded more in the light of an amiable weakness than a serious obstacle to his professional success. Nay, some even carried their partiality so far as to believe that the doctor was far more skilful when partly drunk than when perfectly sober—an abnormal condition, however, in which even his most intimate friends had never seen him—and in difficult cases, requiring more than ordinary skill, were in the habit of

supplying him with whisky till he had reached that particular point when he was supposed to have the most complete possession of all his different powers.

Such was the medical man to whose care Ninian was now confided; one of a class still common enough in rural districts in Scotland, where the temptations to intemperance are almost irresistible. Before proceeding to examine his patient, he refreshed himself with what he called his "morning", a large glass of spirits, undiluted with water, presented to him by John Norrie; for John, though an honest, God-fearing man, would have considered it a gross breach of hospitality to have withheld from his visitor the usual refreshment. Both emptied their glasses at a single draught, with this difference, that while John reverently lifted his bonnet and muttered a few words of thanksgiving, the doctor's only exhibition of feeling was a loud sigh of sensual satisfaction after he had finished his glass.

He then proceeded to examine his patient. His first object was to ascertain whether he had received any injury about the head to

bring on the brain-fever under which he at once pronounced him to be labouring. There was no trace of any such injury, and the doctor gave it as his opinion that the disease had been brought on by some sudden shock, which had overturned the balance of the mind, and reduced the patient, who was evidently a strong, healthy young man, to his present helpless condition. That he was at present in a most dangerous state there could be no doubt; weeks might elapse before he could even tell his name, and during the interval he might be subject to paroxysms which could only be restrained by the use of force.

The doctor promised to make every inquiry, on his return to Islayhead, in order to discover the friends of the unfortunate young man, and, after a few simple directions as to the mode of treatment, took his departure.

Several days elapsed before Ninian's friends became acquainted with his condition. During the whole of that time he was delirious; but, fortunately, his conduct was not so violent as to require the use of

force. Mrs. Norrie, remembering her own absent son, treated him with the kindness of a mother, bathed his feverish brow, and handed him the cooling draught. Ninian's distempered fancy at once led him to imagine that the female form which watched over him, and supplied his wants, could be none other than that of Marion Leslie. It would be difficult to conceive a greater contrast than that which existed between Marion's Hebe-like charms and figure, and the wrinkled face and attenuated figure of old Janet Norrie, but the peculiarity of his disease led him to overlook all these external differences. Old Janet was his Marion, his own Marion, the playmate of his childhood, the idol of his riper years, his heart's treasure, the pride of his eyes; nothing should ever separate them but death. Now they were children alone in a boat at sea, the tide was against them, and they could not return; the cold mists of night chilled the blood of Marion, and she began to cry, but he stripped off his coat and wrapped her in it, and hushed her to sleep, bravely concealing his own tears. Hope

awoke with the dawn; they were hungry; but they could wait, help would soon be at hand. There, in the distance, was a boat—it must be that of Stormy Jack—they would soon be rescued.

Disease gave a fresh shake to the mental kaleidoscope, and a fresh series of figures passed before the view of the mind. He was now on board the "Arctic," and sang, as none but sailors can sing, that inspiring song with which they heave the anchor. They have left the milder regions of the South, and reached the icy regions of the North, where cold, and darkness, and despair seem to have their most natural abode. A monster of the deep has appeared, a boat is launched. Then followed the excitement of the chase, the cry of terror, the shout of victory!

Then from pure exhaustion he would remain quiet for a time, sunk in a kind of stupor. But the tortured brain was still active, though the other bodily organs were at rest. He would awake from his stupor, and speak with ecstasy of the heavenly music to which he had listened, and

of the angelic forms with golden harps which his eyes had been privileged to behold. Some of those celestial forms were still hovering around him, and the dying accents of their sorrowful music were still ringing in his ears. It was thus the angels sang, and he would sing snatches of strange unearthly songs, such as inspired all around him with something of a feeling of awe. All this was the more wonderful, because, before this illness, he could not have sung two consecutive notes of any tune.

But these imaginary scenes were not all of the same ecstatic character; he had his hours of despondency, when the dark imagery of terror closed around him. Some unseen but irresistible force was dragging him away from his heart's idol. He could not see it or seize it, or wrestle against it, but he felt himself receding further and further from his loved one, till, with all the energy of despair, he would spring up in bed, and seizing Janet Norrie's wrinkled, horny hand, would cover it with kisses and tears, and swear that no power in heaven or earth should ever separate

him from his own Marion. Many years had elapsed since poor Janet had felt the tender passion, but she had yet a tear of sympathy to bestow upon the poor lad, who, as she assured her husband, had "gane by himsel wi' love."

Several days intervened before his father and mother discovered where he was. Islayhead could not boast of a daily or even weekly paper, which could serve the same purpose as the second column of the *Times*. The county paper appeared only once a week, and was often a fortnight old, having passed through many hands before it reached those of honest John Kynoch, who, it must be confessed, took little interest in general politics, but confined his reading to reports of the herring fishery and the shipping intelligence. To advertise for their lost son was an idea which would never have occurred to his parents.

The distance between Islayhead and Loanhead was not great, but there was little communication between those two places. At the period of which we write,

the life of every village and small town in Scotland was concentrated, as it were, within itself; there were no railways to form a connecting link between the provinces and the metropolis, and these distant outskirts of the empire scarcely felt their connexion with it save through the periodic visits of the tax-gatherer or the occasional report of some great victory, which roused the heart of the community, and caused it to throb for a time in unison with that of the whole nation.

It thus happened that while all Loanhead was full of Ninian's sudden and mysterious disappearance, it was not known at Islayhead for some days. The general impression was, that he had been robbed and murdered by a band of wandering gipsies or tinkers, who had struck their tents and left the neighbourhood on the same day on which he was lost. This impression was strengthened by the discovery that all his earnings were in his possession at the time when he disappeared.

It is usual in Scotland, when any crime is suspected to have been committed, to

call in the aid of a law-officer called the procurator-fiscal, who visits the spot, and takes what is called a precognition of the whole affair; but the good people of Loanhead never dreamed of applying to him, as he lived in the county town, which was more than twenty miles distant.

It was only after they had searched for the body several days among the wild cliffs by which that part of the coast is bounded, that the idea occurred to them that it might be well to consult Mr. Hamilton, their minister. The minister, in many rural districts in Scotland, is at once the pastor, the lawyer, the doctor, and the general man of business, to whom his parishioners have recourse in all temporal as well as spiritual difficulties. To the fishermen of the east coast, however, the clerical character is invested with something of a superstitious character, and too much intercourse with their spiritual guide would be regarded as "no canny." It is only in extreme cases, therefore, such as the present, that they have recourse to him. Mr. Hamilton, who had known and loved

the lad, felt deeply interested in his fate, and took such steps as soon led to the discovery that Ninian was not dead, but stricken down by a most dangerous attack of illness.

His mother remained with him during his illness. Several weeks elapsed before he was pronounced out of danger, or sufficiently strong to be removed to his own home, where an important change had meanwhile taken place.

CHAPTER XII.

When the laird of Inverchewan and his wife resolved to consult Mr. McWyllie, the family lawyer, about the legitimacy of Marion's birth, they lost no time in communicating with that experienced jurisconsult. They felt that it would be a reproach to themselves to allow the lawful heiress to their estate to remain in her present condition any longer; the first point, therefore, was to ascertain whether she was the lawful heiress; that point once established, their duty in the matter was clear.

At Mrs. Leslie's request, Mr. Hamilton was also invited to attend this important *conseil de famille.* The heart of the poor woman had warmed towards him, who had taught her where to look for light and comfort in the hour of her darkness and her sorrow; she felt unlimited confidence in his intelligence and integrity, and was natur-

ally anxious that he should be present on this important occasion. He had called one day at Inverchewan with the intention of breaking the ice, and pointing out to the laird what was his duty in the matter, when he was agreeably surprised to find that the subject had already occupied his thoughts, and that he was prepared to recognize his niece, as soon as her legitimacy was established.

On the appointed day the representatives of law and theology met at the Castle of Inverchewan, and a greater contrast between two men could scarcely be conceived. No man could have conversed with Mr. Hamilton for a few minutes without discovering that he was a gentleman and a scholar, whose refinement of taste and manners had suffered nothing from daily and habitual contact with the poor.

The appearance and manners of Mr. McWyllie would scarcely have produced such a favourable impression ; in truth, the most charitable of strangers would never have forced himself to believe, against the evidence of his own senses, that old Watty

McWyllie, the lawyer of Islayhead, was, or could be a gentleman, and no one would have scoffed at such a supposition more readily than Watty McWyllie himself. He was just plain Watty McWyllie, and he wished to be nothing else.

He was a man about sixty years of age, with protruding, fishy eyes, of no particular colour, which seemed never to be at rest. His nose was beyond the average length, and the tip of it so fiery red that the wags of Islayhead affirmed that the most venturous fly had never dared to settle upon it for fear of combustion. The rest of his features need not be particularly described; they were the reverse of handsome, and even his warmest admirers were obliged to admit that he was a very plain man. It was, perhaps, the inward consciousness of the unkindness of nature in this respect which led him to neglect all regard to personal appearance, and to indulge to excess in snuff, clouds of which encircled his person when he moved, and found shelter in the folds of his dress when he was at rest.

With all these drawbacks, Mr. McWyllie

was the most influential man in Islayhead. He was the Ahithophel of the town, and his counsel had never been turned into foolishness. Originally a "gutter bairn," without father or mother, he had risen to be the agent of the principal proprietors in the district, and had held more than once the highest municipal rank in his native town. In truth, his rise had been so rapid and so great, that the belief was pretty prevalent among the more superstitious inhabitants of Islayhead, that he had sold himself to the devil for the sake of filthy lucre. Witch-finders, in ancient times, could distinguish their prey by certain marks which the Evil One had impressed on their bodies, and a certain physical infirmity, under which Mr. McWyllie laboured, was regarded as corroborative evidence of his having had dealings with the arch-fiend. His head moved constantly from side to side, like the pendulum of a clock; and when he was labouring under any strong emotion it would turn suddenly round, which gave him the air of a man who was looking at his own back. This was, doubtless, the result of

some partial stroke of paralysis; but such an explanation would not have satisfied the inventive powers of the inhabitants of Islay-head, who ascribed it to the final twist which the devil gave him on confirming their compact.

While tolerably strict in the observance of the outward forms of religion, and regular in his attendance at the parish church, he had an undisguised contempt for ministers, whom he regarded merely as *nati consumere fruges*—the annual consumers of so many chalders of oats and barley—who were always finding fault with the fiars, and suing his clients before the Court of Teinds, for an augmentation of stipend. Notwithstanding their opposite character, he and Mr. Hamilton had always been on friendly terms; the latter was too dignified to take any notice of the gibes and jeers which the lawyer was in the habit of indulging in against his profession, and the lawyer felt that involuntary respect for his minister, of which men of irreligious and worldly habits cannot altogether divest themselves.

"This is a mournful occasion, gentlemen,"

said the laird, after ordering refreshment for his visitors; "but we need not dwell upon the past, which cannot be altered. I am anxious to do what is right. If it can be satisfactorily shown that my brother Francis was married to the mother of this young woman, I am prepared to show her all the kindness and attention which are due to her, as my only brother's daughter, and the heiress of all the landed property of Inverchewan. It would have been well if she had received an education, and been brought up in circumstances, more in keeping with her future position in life; but I could not foresee that I should be left this day without a son."

The laird may have had at that moment some compunctious feelings for the neglect with which he had treated his brother's child, who had certain claims upon his consideration, apart altogether from the brilliant prospects which were now opening up before her. Mr. Leslie was not a man of very high principle, or of great sensibility of character—his great object hitherto had been to jog on through life with as little

trouble to himself and others as possible; but though his moral perceptions were not very acute, he had an indistinct idea that he was in some way to blame for the ignorance of his niece, and her unfitness for the position which she was destined to occupy in life. He was the more ready, therefore, to listen to any scheme which might be proposed for securing for her those advantages of training and education of which she had hitherto been deprived.

Mr. McWyllie seemed instinctively to divine the feeling of which the laird himself was almost unconscious.

"Nobody can blame you, Mr. Leslie. You have acted for the best. Your brother's child had no legal claim upon you for aliment or support. He formed a low connection, which his family was not called upon in any way to recognize; and if it had not been for the change which has recently occurred, it would have been quite right to leave her under the charge of her mother's relations."

"Have you brought the documents to show that she was born in lawful wedlock?"

"*That* have I," said the lawyer, with alacrity; "and, more by token, I was present myself at the marriage, and signed the marriage lines. Everything was done, as the statute anent marriages prescribes, and though it was old Kilbaudy who tied the knot, the minister there himself could not have tied it sickerer."

"I wonder, Mr. McWyllie, that you should have lent your countenance to anything so disreputable as a secret marriage."

"I understand the feeling, minister. None of us like poachers on our own demesnes, and in law and divinity we kittle up our backs like wild cats at the sight of irregular practitioners. But it was no bad feeling that led me to be present at this marriage. Mr. Frank could not summon courage to marry the lassie in public, and was too much attached to her to leave her alone; so, to prevent worse from happening, I arranged the secret marriage. The lass had no gentle blood in her veins, but she was an honest man's bairn, and a distant connection of my own, so I thought it my

duty to see that she came by no skaith in this matter. Here are all the documents connected with the marriage, and the minister, who has some experience in such cases, will bear me out when I say that everything is correct, and that by the law of this realm her legitimacy is indisputable."

Mr. Leslie and Mr. Hamilton glanced at the papers. The laird at once recognized the signature of his brother, and was satisfied, from the explanations which Mr. McWyllie gave, that the marriage was legal, and Marion Leslie the heiress of all his landed property.

They had next to decide what plan should be adopted for supplying the defects of her education. Mr. Hamilton, who was intimately acquainted with the Kynoch family, reported her to be a clever, lively girl, who had all the makings of a lady about her; though deficient in accomplishments, she had mastered the ordinary branches of education, and she was possessed of such tact and powers of imitation that she could easily catch the tone and

assume the manners of any circle of society in which she might find herself. A year or two of residence at some good school in Edinburgh or London, would divest her of all that was *gauche* or rustic in her manners, and give her the same ease as if she had been accustomed to good society from her earliest infancy.

"There is no fear of that," said Mr. McWyllie—"it is wonderful how soon the women folk pick up anything they turn their minds to. There was the old laird of Bullrowtery, who married his own housekeeper; everybody laughed at him, and said that laying the tablecloth was not the best training for sitting at the top of the table. But bide ye now, the lass went to England for a twelvemonth; and when she came back, who but she? There was not a born lady in all the land could do the honours of her own house better—and I have heard the Duchess Jane, who was the leader of fashion in the north, make the same remark."

"I am only afraid," said Mr. Hamilton, "that she may be unwilling to leave the

Kynochs. You know she has been treated in every way as their child, and has never known any other parents. She must, therefore, be attached to her present home; and the brilliant prospects which are dawning upon her may fail to wean her heart from the home of her childhood."

Here the minister was suddenly interrupted by a burst of laughter from Mr. McWyllie, which first made his face purple, and then whirled his head round, as if some invisible power had been experimenting on the flexibility of the muscles and bones of his neck. For a minute or two he presented the back of his head to his audience, who were too much accustomed to these gyrations to feel any alarm or surprise.

"You'll excuse me, minister — hech! hech! hech!—but I am like to choke. *Risum teneatis, amici?* Ha! ha! The idea of a lassie preferring a fisherman's hut to the Castle of Inverchewan! Do not say that again, minister, or ye wull gar me burst. Many a good sermon I have heard you preach against the vanities of this

wicked world, and no doubt ye thought that ye touched the hearts of your hearers; but, oh! minister, if there had been only a small window to every heart for you to peep through, ye would have seen that the men were all thinking of oil or herrings, and the women of new bonnets or silk gowns. And do ye think that there is a lass in all Scotland, from Maidenhead to John o' Groats, who would not jump at such an offer, like a young grilse at its first fly? To be sure, I have read in story-books of men declining thrones and women refusing coronets, and preferring lives of contented obscurity to rank and wealth, but I never met with any such cases in actual life. It is easy refusing rank and wealth when the offer is purely imaginary, but it would be against human nature to decline them when they are actually presented to us. Esther was no doubt content to live with Mordecai, her uncle, and said daily, as she stroked the old man's beard, that she was happier with him than Vashti on the throne; but no sooner had Ahasuerus put away his wilful queen, and proclaimed

himself open to competition, than Esther began to busk herself like the other bonnie lassies. Now, minister, there is Scripture for you. All women are like Esther—they never lose their chance where any good is going."

Here the speaker was suddenly arrested by a violent twist, as if he had suddenly turned round to enjoy his own wit, and looked to his own back for applause.

As to Mr. Hamilton, he preserved a dignified silence—he would have considered it beneath the dignity of his sacred calling to take any notice of the unprofitable jesting of his carnal-minded neighbour, whose ideas on every subject were altogether "of the earth, earthy."

"I think," said Mrs. Leslie, "that the matter should be broken gently to the young girl. We have not the same claims upon her affections as those whom she has been accustomed to regard as her parents, and it will take some time before she will come to look upon us in the same light. We must try, also, not to hurt the feelings of the Kynochs, and, if possible, to gain their con-

sent to the removal of their adopted daughter. I know how much influence Mr. Hamilton has with all his parishioners, and I think it would be well if he would talk the matter over with the Kynochs before we formally propose to remove this young person from their charge. It is natural that they should be unwilling to part with her, but I do not think that they will offer any opposition, when they find that by doing so they would be standing in the way of her interests.

"Opposition!" said Mr. McWyllie, "you need fear no opposition from them; they will only be too glad to have a mouth less to feed, and a back less to clothe. You speak of these fisherfolks as if they were fine ladies and gentlemen, who must be treated with delicate tact, whereas a few pounds, judiciously distributed, will have more power over them than all the minister's fine speeches."

"You mistake the character of the people," said Mr. Hamilton, with dignity; "I know the Kynochs well, and the offer of money, on such an occasion, would give

mortal offence. Beneath a rude exterior they possess as much tenderness of feeling as the highest of the land, and none can know the warmth of their affection but those who have witnessed their great sorrow when their loved ones have been destroyed by their great enemy, the ocean. They have no time for indulgence in the luxury of woe, but they never forget or cease to lament their dead. Every storm at sea reminds them of those they have lost;—it was in such a storm that a husband, a son, or a brother perished. I was visiting the other day an old woman of eighty; the wind was blowing fiercely at the time, and we could hear the roar of the waves as they broke with fury on the shingly beach.

"'Lord help a' them that's at sea!' she said; 'it was just in such a day as this that my Sandy was drooned.'

"'How long ago?' I asked.

"'Just fifty years, come the time. I ance was a happy wife and a proud mither, but the sea has gotten my guidman and my sax bonny sons. It is the Lord's wull, and I

maun submit. I'll no be lang ahint them noo.'"

"Come now, minister, keep these tit-bits of religious gossip and fine feeling for the tea-tables of the pious old maids of Islay-head. If you had given this sentimental old beldame a gill of whisky, she would have forgotten all her cares and grown as canty as a kitten. You had better leave this matter in my hands, Mr. Leslie; I know human nature better than the minister. He looks at it from a theological point of view, and I look upon it as it really is. A few pounds will make this business all square. The Kynochs have brought up this girl, and have never received anything for their pains, it is but right and fair to pay them a reasonable sum. Empower me to pay them two hundred pounds, and I will undertake that there shall be no opposition from them."

"I would not advise you to offer any money to Stormy Jack," said the minister, dryly.

"And what for no? He will jump at it like a cod-fish at one of his own baits. He is not such a sentimental fool as you take him to be. The chink of the golden guineas will have more power over him than a score of your best sermons."

"Don't you think," said Mrs. Leslie to her husband, "that Mr. Hamilton should speak to these people, as he knows them so well? If he finds that money can be offered to them without offence, we can then get Mr. McWyllie to pay them whatever is necessary."

Exactly the same idea had occurred to Mr. Leslie, and had met with his approval, but he would have considered it a breach of marital duty not to combat it when brought forward by his wife.

"Na, na, Maggie; leave business to business men; I do not grudge the money, and I had rather not be under any obligation to these Kynochs. That old sinner, Mackay, the miller, is the lassie's relation, and he has no kindly feeling to me or mine. He has the worst tongue in all the parish, and would be proclaiming at kirk and

market that the heiress of Inverchewan was brought up on charity. Dinna spare the siller, McWyllie; let them have nothing to complain of on that score."

Mr. Hamilton, perceiving that further opposition was useless, contented himself with remarking that, if money was offered at all, he hoped it would be done in such a way as not to hurt the honest fisherman's feelings.

"Never you fash your thumb about that," said Mr. McWyllie; "it is aye guid to be getting. I have lived in Islayhead man and boy for more than fifty years, and I never refused to earn an honest penny. I have got money from different hands and for different purposes, but I never refused it. Do you think that a fisherman has finer feelings than I have?"

Mr. Hamilton did not consider it necessary to give an opinion upon this point, and the matter was left in Mr. McWyllie's hands. He intended to have called upon Stormy Jack at once, but some pressing business demanded his presence in a distant part of the country; and before he

returned, an event occurred which must be briefly alluded to, as it had some influence upon the future life of the leading hero of this tale.

CHAPTER XIII.

The east coast of Scotland is frequently visited with fearful gales, the approach of which might easily be discovered beforehand by the usual indications given by the barometer. The fishermen, however, have more confidence in the opinions of certain wiseacres than the teachings of the barometer, and, if their decision be favourable, they put to sea with perfect confidence in their own safety. Their own melancholy experience has proved to them again and again that their weather prophets are not to be trusted; but still, with a fatalism worse than that of the Turks, they refuse to listen to the voice of reason or the teachings of science, and expose their lives to unnecessary danger. A benevolent gentleman residing near Loanhead had bought a barometer for the public benefit, and employed a lecturer to explain its use; but

he might have spared himself the expense—the fishermen refused to be instructed, and treated all such new-fangled notions with undisguised contempt.

Some even of the more religious amongst them had gravely pronounced that it would be a doubting of Providence, and the cherishing of a carnal and self-sufficient spirit, to put their trust in an instrument of man's designing, instead of putting their trust in Him whom the winds and the waves obey.

The event about to be narrated occurred about a week after Ninian had left his home. Mrs. Kynoch had left Loanhead to wait upon her son, and Stormy Jack had set sail at an early hour in the morning on board his own fishing smack, leaving Alice under the charge of a distant female relative. The morning had been rather cloudy, but there was nothing in the appearance of the atmosphere to lead to apprehension or anxiety about the state of the weather. About mid-day a strong gale sprang up, and gradually increased in violence till the following morning, when it blew a perfect

hurricane. The rain fell in torrents, and the appearance of the ocean reminded the weather-beaten seamen, who assembled at the point of the pier at Islayhead, of the fearful cycloons which they had witnessed on the Indian Ocean. As the morning advanced, several vessels were seen in the offing, striving to get round the head, and returning bravely to the attack when beaten back by the winds and the waves.

The inhabitants of Islayhead witnessed the scene with the same intense interest as spectators may be supposed to feel in a great battle, when the issues of war are long doubtful. Two of them succeeded in rounding the headland, but, seized by the eddying waves, they were dashed upon the rocks and went to pieces. There was a wild shriek from the women, and something like a groan from the men, as they saw the crews of these vessels perish within a few hundred yards, without being able to render them any assistance. A few of the braver and more impulsive did indeed rush forward, in the hope that they might be able to rescue some of the shipwrecked sailors when

they approached the shore; but, blinded by the spray and beaten back by the waves, they gave up the attempt in despair.

A little after mid-day a fishing smack attracted the attention of all; she was drifting rapidly to leeward, and it was only by the most skilful management that she was kept off the rocks. Again and again she seemed irrecoverably lost, when by some skilful manœuvre, the danger was averted. She was recognised as the property of John Kynoch, of Loanhead, and many an earnest prayer was put up for the safety of him and his four companions. All felt that she could never reach the harbour, and their only hope was that she might be run ashore on a spot where the fishermen on board might be rescued. Every foot of the shore was familiar to Stormy Jack, whose stalwart frame could be seen at the helm. On and on, faster and faster, rushed the smack before the wind; in vain they tried to enter the harbour—they were swept past it with the swiftness of an arrow—and, before the crowd had time to draw their breath, the smack was ashore to the west of

the harbour. The Coast-guard had calculated that she would go ashore at that particular spot, which they had reached with Manley's apparatus before she struck; again and again they tried to shoot a line over the smack, but each time they failed, the line falling short by a few yards. The smack was going fast to pieces—a few minutes more and all would be over. Again the line was discharged and fell short, when a man, with a rope attached to his middle, was seen to jump overboard and seize the line. He reached the smack in safety, and the cradle was soon alongside.

One after another the fishermen reached the shore, till the only one left on board was the man who had risked his life to save the others, and who was now recognized to be the master of the smack. It was only after all the others had left that he thought of consulting his own safety; he had almost reached the shore, when the rope on which the cradle was suspended broke, and Stormy Jack fell into the boiling surf below.

More than one brave fellow, forgetful of self, sprang into the sea, and when Stormy

Jack rose to the surface, he found himself in the grasp of several powerful arms. But that sturdy frame knew no exhaustion ; he shook them off with good-natured force, and struck out bravely for the shore.

There was many a friendly hand to greet him, and many a kind voice to express sympathy with him on his loss. He spoke no word of sorrow or regret, though the sea that day had swallowed up the most of his fortune, but pointing to another small vessel, which had just rounded the headland, he said,

"Never mind the smack. Look at that schooner. If we do not help them, in a few minutes they will be in eternity."

The schooner alluded to had rounded the headland about an hour after the smack. She was under less skilful management, and while running for the south bay, was caught by the waves and dashed ashore among the rocks, where she went to pieces in a few minutes. Masts, rigging, and keel gradually disappeared, leaving no trace behind save the few pieces of wreck which strewed the beach. Two of the crew

perished before assistance could reach them, and all would have been lost, if it had not been for the efforts of the brave fishermen, acting under the guidance of Stormy Jack, who was the first to reach the rocks on which the vessel had turned over. Several others soon joined him with ropes, which were fastened round the crew, who were thus dragged in safety over the projecting walls, which form a barrier against the encroachments of the sea.

Two of them were benumbed with cold and fatigue; it was doubtful whether they were still alive, and there was no medical man at hand to apply the usual restoratives. But the worthy fishermen of Islayhead are too familiar with drowning, in all its different stages, not to have devised some means of fanning the flickering spark of life into a flame. The unconscious seamen were committed to the care of some tender-hearted female Samaritans, who scrupled not to render them the same service, which Abishag, the Shunamite, rendered to David when he was old and stricken in years. We question whether the whole

college of surgeons could have devised a more effectual remedy; at all events, it was perfectly successful, and these simple, guileless souls, who thought no evil, had all the inward satisfaction of having done a good action and saved the lives of two of their fellow-creatures.

No more ships were driven ashore that day; but the ocean, furious at being deprived of its usual victims, resolved to avenge itself on those on land, who feared no danger. A number of workmen were employed in clearing away the stones and *débris* which had been cast into the harbour, through a breach having been made in the wall by the heavy masses of water which were dashed against it. The tide had now receded; it was already two hours past high-water, and scarcely any water was flowing through the breach. The workmen suspected no danger, and had continued their labours for about an hour, when a huge wave was seen approaching the harbour with irresistible force. The wall of the harbour prevented the workmen from seeing it, and those on shore had not sufficient

time to warn them of its approach. It broke against the wall of the harbour with a roar like thunder, and rushed like a mighty torrent through the breach. For a moment the workmen disappeared. When it receded, they were seen clinging to the stones, or striving to regain their feet. Scarcely had they done so, when the ocean, like a tiger rendered furious by the taste of blood, rushed forward with irresistible fury, and a huge wave, some sixteen feet in depth, swept the men into the harbour, where they were seen struggling for their lives amid the boiling flood. Many were saved by means of ropes thrown from the boats and ships in the harbour, and none distinguished themselves more in this work of mercy than Stormy Jack ; but the waves enclosed in their deadly embrace no fewer than fifteen workmen. That night there was weeping and sorrow in Islayhead ; among that rude race all emotions are violent and evanescent—their tears flowed fast, but they soon ceased to flow.

Mr. Hamilton was not present during this catastrophe. He had been summoned

in the early part of the day to visit a sick parishioner, and was prevented by the storm from returning till rather late in the evening. The manse stands at some little distance from the town, and he learned nothing of the sad events of the day till his servant came out to receive his horse. In a few hurried words he informed him of all that had happened.

On entering his own quiet study he heard the sound of violent weeping, and the rough but kindly voice of his housekeeper, Jenny, striving to administer consolation. She soon entered the room, her eyes red with weeping, and explained to Mr. Hamilton, as distinctly as her sobs and tears would permit, that the widows of some of the drowned men had come to consult him about the recovery of the bodies of their husbands. It is thought that the connection between body and soul is not so completely dissolved through death, as that the condition of the former may not, in some measure, affect the happiness of the latter; and the fishermen are almost as anxious to rescue their dead from the ocean,

and to bestow upon them the rites of Christian sepulture, as the ancients, who believed that the manes of all such unhappy ones were condemned to wander for a hundred years on the banks of the Styx.

It was a painful scene; but to such scenes the kind-hearted pastor had been long habituated. He listened to each tale of sorrow, and waited patiently till the first strong outbreak of grief was over. Hours of deep sorrow are hours of heartfelt forgiveness: some of those husbands had been rough men, selfish, self-indulgent, and not over-kind; but at that hour their wives thought of them as they had dreamed them to be when they pledged their troth to them at the altar. It was God's will, and they must submit, but they would never know a happy day till they saw their husband's bodies laid beside those of their kinsmen in the old kirk-yard.

Mr. Hamilton knew that that was not the time to reason against the superstitious feeling of these bereaved ones; he contented himself with reminding them that on the great day the sea would give up its dead;

and, when they were sufficiently calm, he knelt with them, and gave expression to feelings which were struggling in their hearts—mingled feelings of faith and hope, dashed over by the flood of present sorrow.

He then dismissed them to their homes, and hurried to the harbour, to ascertain what steps had been taken for the recovery of the bodies. Fourteen of them had been recovered, and were stretched side by side on the strand. It was a fearful sight!—the features were convulsed and distorted, as if they had struggled and wrestled against death with all the strength of their unsubdued and unwasted energies. There was nothing of the calmness and contentment of those who have long been prepared to meet death; the grim tyrant had seized them without a moment's notice, and pressed their strong life out of them with his iron grasp. And how had they met their fate? Not as the brave soldiers of the "Birkenhead," who cheered for their queen and country till the water rose and closed over their lips for ever; but as men often meet their

fate at sea, with shouts of terror, and with yells of agony, with curses and blasphemy. For one man who meets death at sea with the faith and fortitude of a Christian, there are ten who seek relief in the unconsciousness of intoxication, or express their despair in cursing the name of that Being who permits his creatures to perish where no eye but His can see them, and no arm but His can help them.

Mr. Hamilton was inexpressibly shocked at witnessing the imprint which the last fierce passions had left on the lifeless features; but he felt in his heart of charity that it was a fearful ordeal through which they had passed, and questioned whether his own faith would have sustained him, if death had come upon him with such fierce and sudden violence. Mr. Hamilton lived much alone, and, like all men accustomed to solitude, he had indulged in that subtle self-anatomy—that weighing and balancing of every passing feeling—that analysis of secret motives and springs of action—which weakens the strongest men, and makes them morbidly sensitive.

He left the scene of woe, and walked for miles at a rapid pace along the beach. There is something in violent bodily action which aids in allaying strong mental emotion; but he sought in vain to banish from his mind the spectacle of woe which he had just witnessed. Often and again, in hours of great sorrow, he had felt the soothing influence of the sea; for there is a magic power in the ocean to draw us away from ourselves, and to cause us to forget, in the contemplation of its immensity, the cankering cares and griefs of the moment. But the dark imagery of woe had taken too powerful a hold on his imagination to be dispelled by ordinary means, and every object brought under his notice, tended only to deepen the impression already produced. There was the ocean, like a wild beast satiated with prey, and couching in its lair, but occasionally showing, by a sudden rush, that the thirst for blood was not altogether quenched; while the beach on which he trod was strewn with fragments of wood from the vessels which had foundered.

He reached a headland, about four miles from Islayhead, which commanded a view of the noble bay and harbour. There was a natural seat at the summit of the rock, where often he had sat for hours, and feasted his eyes with the beauty of the scene, or indulged in those dreams which the imagination is apt to conjure up when surrounded by the sublime and the beautiful in nature; heavy clouds were coursing along the sky, and occasionally concealing the moon, and casting their dark shadows over the water.

He sat down and covered his face with his hands. He prayed earnestly for those bereaved ones, who for the future were doomed to eat the bread of sorrow and of poverty, and thought on means for procuring them immediate relief. Some of them were not members of his church, but his heart was too large for sectarian feeling at any moment. Never is the brotherhood of the human race so distinctly realized as in times of public calamity and disaster: the heart-strings of all feel the same tug of sympathy, because humanity, when roused

to know itself, feels that there is but one heart beneath the purple robes and the tattered rags. There may be a gulf between Dives and Lazarus in the next world, but in this world they are very near to one another—perhaps without knowing it.

But those bodies lying stiff and stark on the beach—would they haunt him for ever? The whole fourteen bodies were as present to his mind, in all their horrible distinctness and reality, as when he first looked at them. There were the clenched hands filled with sand, the contorted features, the stiffened limbs, the blood bespattered over their mangled bodies.

And then came the scene at the manse—the wives bereft of their husbands, weeping for them, and refusing to be comforted.

He had known these men intimately. A few of them were God-fearing men, about whose happiness he could entertain no doubt; but this was not the case with all. He felt that some of them were unprepared to die. And then came the harrowing thought that he had not been so faithful in

his dealings with them as he ought to have been. If he had only spoken to them more earnestly and affectionately, their characters might have been different; but now the opportunity had passed away, never to return. Their doom was fixed and sealed for ever, and he who had taken upon him solemn vows when he was intrusted with a cure of souls, could he look up to heaven with a calm conscience, and pronounce himself innocent?

And then he thought of the many similar casualties which had occurred since he had entered upon his ministry. All was dark, hopeless, and depressing. His ministerial career at Islayhead seemed like the roll of the prophet, written within and without, and "the writing thereof was mourning, and lamentation and woe." It seemed as if he had lived in vain, and he, the strong man, the comforter of others, felt the need of comfort. He felt the solitariness of his life, of his labour and his sorrows, and his overburdened heart found relief in a flood of tears.

He was so intensely occupied with his

own feelings that he did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps. A strong arm was placed upon his shoulders, but he scarcely felt it—the strong arm closed round him, and raised him gently to his feet, and a rough but kindly voice, which he at once recognized as that of Stormy Jack, addressed him.

"Oh, Mr. Hamilton, you will catch your death of cold. What are you doing here at this late hour?"

He observed his minister's tears, but, with the innate delicacy of one of nature's own gentlemen, he took no notice of them; perhaps he thought of One who shed tears when brought face to face with death, and he loved his minister all the better because he was a man, and not a stoic.

"Is it you, John? This has been a fearful day. There is many a sad heart to-night in Islayhead, and many a home without its head."

"Ay, ay, sir. But it is God's will, and we maun submit. We fisher folks, that gain our living on the sea, a' ken that the sea may some day be our grave—so there's

no great hardship, when we are prepared for it. I am sorriest for the three masons, who, you may say, had nothing to do with the sea."

"You, John, have been a great loser to-day, yourself."

"Oh, ay — I have lost the bit smack. It cost me mony a night's wark ere I got the money to buy her, and, maybe, I was just geyen proud o' her. But Marion and Ninian are now grown up, and Alice, puir lassie, winna need muckle lang—so we have no reason to complain. The loss of a smack is nothing to the loss of a life."

"True, John. But how do you happen to be here at this late hour?"

"Oh, you see, sir, Willie Begg was washed out to sea by that awfu' wave; so his wife, puir body, came to me, and nothing would satisfy her but that I must search for his body. I was a wee wheen shaken and dung doon like by this day's wark, but I couldna refuse."

"Have you found it?"

"Na, sir. Willie was a lang voyage sailor, and their bodies are seldom

found. But it may cast up to-morrow."

The man of refinement and education leaned on the arm of the strong man, and derived strength from this contact.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW days after the events recorded in the previous chapter, Mr. McWyllie found it convenient to pay his promised visit to honest John Kynoch, the fisherman of Loanhead. Mr. McWyllie had a profound contempt for everything like show or parade; he possessed all the substantials of life: he had the best whisky and the best claret in his cellar; he had a comfortable balance at his banker's, and had invested his money in speculations which always paid; yet in his dress and equipage he affected the appearance of extreme plainness.

His old horse Donald had been at least twenty years in his service, and might be emphatically described as an animal of great *aplomb;* he had never been known to change his pace from the jog-trot in which he habitually indulged, or to change his

mind when he saw fit to prefer another road to the one which his master wished him to take.

Society is said to be founded on a compromise, and there was something of the same principle influencing the relations between master and horse, and leaving it doubtful which of the two possessed the mastery; for if Donald insisted on having his own way in the first instance, he usually yielded in the second. No persuasions on the part of his friends had ever induced Mr. McWyllie to part with him. There seemed to be something of a mutual understanding between Mr. McWyllie and this cross-grained brute, which, while he occasionally resisted the will of his master, was in a chronic state of opposition to every one else, so that the inhabitants of Islayhead, ever prone to the supernatural, affirmed that Mr. McWyllie, having sold himself to a certain personage, was fulfilling part of the compact in driving such a vicious animal.

The groom who had charge of Donald, and who usually accompanied Mr. McWyllie on his journeys, was familiarly known in

Islayhead as the "Partan," that being the local name for a crab. He was a small, deformed, elderly man, and had received the *sobriquet* of "Partan" from certain supposed resemblances in temper between him and that snappish animal. Like most deformed persons in his position in life, he was a professed unbeliever, and a thorough hater of the whole human race. Perhaps the only two beings in existence that had any hold over his affections, were the master who constantly bullied him, and the horse which seldom yielded to his will. His own species he hated most cordially; this hatred was painted in every wrinkle of his satyr-like features, and the most rebellious child could always be hushed into obedience when threatened to be handed over to the tender mercies of the "Partan." When alone he was constantly muttering to himself, and the *refrain* of his soliloquy was contained in the simple but expressive words:—

"Curse them, I hate them all!" The only occasions when he exhibited any unusual emotion were after a shipwreck, or

a storm, or a funeral, when he was observed to chuckle to himself, and to rub his hands with elfish glee.

This morning Donald was unusually obedient; and as for the Partan, he had exhibited something approaching to cheerfulness ever since the loss of life in the harbour of Islayhead. The pleasant drive along the coast and the bracing sea air had a cheering influence on Mr. McWyllie's spirits, and when he reached John Kynoch's cottage he felt almost as if he were about to do a virtuous action, and to add to the happiness of the family within.

That family was already in some measure broken up. Mrs. Kynoch had been absent for several weeks, watching by the sick-bed of her only son, who was still too weak to be removed to his home. John had just returned, after being out at sea all night, and had lain down to rest. Alice occupied her usual place by the window which overlooked the sea, and Marion, to borrow the local phrase, "was washing up the dishes" after breakfast. She was as yet too young and too buoyant with health and spirits

to be deeply or permanently depressed by any passing misfortune; and though she had shed some tears on hearing of Ninian's dangerous illness, and felt at first somewhat solemnized by the recent catastrophe, which had swept away some whom she had known well, these events caused only an evanescent ripple of sorrow on the calm stream of her life's enjoyment, which soon flowed on as placidly as ever.

Leaving Donald in charge of the Partan, Mr. McWyllie knocked at the door of the cottage, which was opened by the fair Marion. It was one of the peculiarities of the disease under which he laboured, that any strong or sudden emotion brought on a sort of paroxysm which caused his head to whirl round; and as the fine speech which he had been meditating, for the purpose of announcing to the young heiress the brilliant prospects which were dawning on her humble lot, was disturbed by her sudden appearance, he no sooner cast his eyes upon her, than by a sudden revolution of his head he withdrew them, and looked steadily out to sea. Marion, on seeing this

startling apparition, suddenly closed the door, and running to the kitchen, said,

"Oh, Alice! here is that lawyer body, McWyllie, with the back of his head where his face should be!"

"Hush, Marion!—how can you be so rude? You have closed the door in his face. Go and open it quickly. He must be hurt at your conduct, and may have heard what you said."

Mr. McWyllie had heard Marion's description of his peculiar personal appearance at the moment, but he was too much of a lawyer to feel or display anger when nothing could be gained by it. When Marion returned to the door, his face had resumed its natural position, and he tried to look as amiable as possible.

"So you were frightened at the old man with his *geck* neck. If I had been a young callant, with golden locks and rosy cheeks, aiblins ye wouldna have shut the door so soon. Nay, never blush, no one would blame you for preferring sunny May to chill December."

Marion muttered some words of apology,

and invited the lawyer to enter the kitchen, as there was no fire "but a house," that is, in the other room. He saluted Alice respectfully, but, feeling that the part of a comforter would ill become him, he had the good taste to take no notice of her pale, wasted face and attenuated frame.

He had ample leisure, while conversing with Alice on general topics, to watch the movements of Marion. In truth, the erratic movements of his head enabled him to watch anyone, without leading the party thus observed to suspect that he was the object of his special notice. The survey was satisfactory; the old lawyer, though he sacrificed little to the graces himself, and had never done anything to win the good opinion of the fair sex, was no mean judge of female beauty. He felt that, with Marion's natural advantages of face and figure, it would cost little to make her a lady. He tried to engage her in conversation with only partial success; her bashful coyness and maidenish reserve prevented her from doing justice to her natural abilities, but her answers, though brief, satisfied him

that she was not deficient in quickness and cleverness, and that it was not too late for her to acquire all the accomplishments of a young lady of rank and fortune.

Meanwhile, John Kynoch had awoke from his sleep, and, on entering the kitchen, found Mr. McWyllie there. Sailors have no great admiration for lawyers generally, and Mr. McWyllie was not much of a favourite among the fishermen in and around Islayhead. His name was familiar to them through certain legal documents occasionally distributed among them by exacting creditors when they fell into arrears, and his visits were rarely visits of ceremony or friendship.

John Kynoch was somewhat surprised to find such a visitor in his house, but he had too much kindliness and natural courtesy to show any such feeling, and gave him a civil, if not a cordial welcome.

"Well, John," said Mr. McWyllie, expressively, "I suppose you did not expect to see me this morning?"

John frankly admitted that his expectations had not led him to anticipate such an event.

"And I daresay you are beating your brains to find out what has brought me here. You are trying to remember whether you have some outstanding debt that has fallen due, or some obdurate creditor who requires to be paid up."

"Thanks to these two hands," said John, displaying a pair the muscles of which stood out like whipcord, and the palms of which were as hard as horn, "I never owed any man a groat, and, though it is no for me to boast, I never shall, so long as I have health and strength. No man ever craved me yet, so *that* is not your errand."

"I hear, John, that you have lost your fishing smack, and thus lost nearly all the earnings of your life's hard toil. What would you think, now, if some kind fairy had sent me to make up that loss, and to provide you with money to buy another smack?"

There was something of a deeper tinge of brown on John's weather-beaten cheek, and a dangerous expression for a moment in his eye, but he soon regained his usual calmness.

"I am in no humour for joking, Mr. McWyllie. It is true the smack is lost, and, at my time of life, I cannot expect to earn money to buy another. It is a great loss, I do not deny it, the greatest loss that has ever befallen me. But I have never complained, and never shall. It was a proud day for me when I saw her launched, and, maybe, I was owre proud about her. Be that as it may, she is gone, and it seems scarcely kind for you to come here to remind me of my loss, which I can scarcely yet have forgotten."

"Hoot awa, John! A lawyer's time is aye worth money, and who would ever pay me for such a daft errand as insulting a burly carl like you, who could twist me round your little finger? I have other business in hand, and I am sure you will be glad to see me here, when I tell you the object of my visit. I am the bearer of glad tidings, John Kynoch, and you, above all men, ought to bid me welcome."

"Well, well!" said John, gruffly, "I seldom hear much good news now-a-days, so it will be all the more welcome coming

from you. But you lawyers talk and veer about so in your speech, instead of steering straight into port, that it is not easy for a plain man like me to follow you. Out with it at once, and then I shall know whether it be good or bad."

Mr. McWyllie had been meditating, meanwhile, on the best way of breaking the matter to the stalwart fisherman, so as not to give offence, but perceiving that he was growing impatient, he thought it better to state at once frankly and openly that an important change had recently taken place in the prospects of the orphan girl.

"What would you think, John, if I were to tell you that you have in your house at this moment the heiress to one of the finest estates in the county?"

"I should think it about as likely a story as that you had come to give me money to buy a new smack."

"Why, John, you must be a warlock to hit the truth so exactly. Marion Leslie, the fatherless, motherless lassie, that has been brought up by you as if she were your own flesh and blood, is heiress to all

the lands of the barony of Inverchewan, with all the houses, biggings, orchards, yards, and other pertinents thereof, with all the mills and multures, with all and haill the salmon fishings in salt and fresh water, with the fishertown of Loanhead, with the ports, anchorages, and fishings thereof, and with all rights and privileges as enjoyed by the present laird. What are you staring at, John? Do you not understand the legal phraseology? Well, it just amounts to this: that when the auld laird dies Marion will succeed to all the lands, and as I know the rent roll of every estate in the county, I may safely say that she will be worth looking after."

The faculties of plain, uneducated men like John Kynoch are slow to embrace any new idea; it takes some considerable time and no small effort before it can force its way and present itself in an intelligible form to the mind; but once admitted, it is never allowed to escape—the intellectual portcullis drops, and it becomes a prisoner for life. When he had gradually come to understand that Marion Leslie was the

heiress of great wealth, his generous, unselfish heart throbbed with joy at the thought that his recent losses would not affect her comfort in after-life, and that she would be placed beyond the reach of want. As yet, in the simplicity of his heart, he never dreamed that her brilliant prospects would in any way interfere with her present position. As yet she was his own Marion, his own daughter, and it did not strike him that others could have stronger claims upon her than himself.

With an air of natural dignity, he advanced to Marion, who had listened to Mr. McWyllie with a puzzled air, as if she scarcely understood his words, and taking her hand lovingly in his, he said, "Marion, this is grand news, but you are well worth all this good fortune, and more, too, if you get it. You have been the light of my eyes, and the joy of my home, since your mother placed you in my arms, and asked me to care for you. The thought of that trust has kept me from much evil, and made me a better man. Alice there knows that you have been to me as a

daughter, and your own father, if he were here this day, could not be a happier man than I am. I hope God will give you grace to make a good use of what He has given you."

"But I have never known any father but you," said Marion, earnestly; "it is only lately that I learned that I was not your child. I do not know exactly what the gentleman means, but if it is any good fortune to me, I am glad of it for your sake as well as my own. I shall be able to show that I have felt the great kindness you have shown me, when those who were as *sib* to me took no notice of me. Does he mean that I have fallen heir to some money, as Jenny Gibb did the other day, when her brother, the skipper, died in the Indies?"

"Far better than that, Marion," said Alice, smiling; "you will now be a grand lady, and drive about in your coach, with gold-laced footmen behind you. Lords and ladies will be your companions, and you will soon forget the simple folks at Loanhead—far sooner than some of them will forget you."

"Oh! Alice, how can you say so?" said Marion, throwing her arms round her neck and kissing her tenderly. "I would rather that all the siller in the warld were at the bottom of the sea than that I should ever cease to love you as I love you now. But this news has taken me by surprise. It seems I have fallen heir to some money. How much is it? Could I hold it all in my apron?"

She seized that article of dress by the two corners, and with a roguish smile, and arch expression of *naïveté*, distended it before Mr. McWyllie, and asked,

"Do you think that would hold it?"

In moments of strong excitement, when the nerves are unstrung, and the mental powers overstrained, the smallest thing incongruous or inconsistent may move us to laughter. A fly settling on the nose of a dying man, may so affect his children, who have been watching by his bed-side for successive nights, and weeping till the fountain of tears is dried up, that they cannot restrain their laughter; and that which is the result of purely physical causes has often

been ascribed to levity and want of natural affection. In the pulpit, and even on the scaffold, such displays of apparent levity have at times occurred, being the result of causes altogether independent of the power of volition of the parties thus affected.

The idea of the price of the barony of Inverchewan being contained in Marion's distended apron so tickled Mr. McWyllie's sense of the ludicrous, that, though not much addicted to laughing, he led off like a noble old hound, who has found the right scent, and the others followed his example, without exactly knowing why.

Marion stood with her apron distended; she was so surprised at the rotatory movements of Mr. McWyllie's head, and the frequency of his attempts to examine the exact conformation of his own back, that she forgot her own act, which was the cause of these eccentric gyrations, and waited as if she expected that the money would drop into her lap.

"Oh, lassie! haud doon your apron!" said Mr. McWyllie, at intervals, as each successive paroxysm allowed him to speak;

"haud doon your apron, or you will be the death o' me! Hech! hech! Na, my dear, your apron wadna haud it a', and that fish creel wadna haud it a', even if ilka plack o't were paid in gowd!"

"Eh, sirs!" said Marion, "I maun be awfu' rich! Jenny Gibb's fortune was nothing to this. What shall I ever be able to do with it? The first thing I'll do will be to buy the finest silk gowns in all Islayhead for Alice and my mother. Yes, Alice, I will, and you shall wear it for my sake, and I'll take you to those sunny lands in the South, which the doctor says would cure you. Dinna shake your head, Alice; what is money to me if I am not to share it with you? And as for you, daddy, never mind the fishing-smack, you shall have a yacht as fine as that of the young Englishman who came down last summer and fished for turbot in the bay."

"Hooly and fairly," said old McWyllie, who had no sympathy with this outburst of generous feeling. "Dinna drive so fast. It will be time enough to spend the money when it is yours. The auld laird will

brook a' as long as he lives, and you will have nothing but what he chooses to give you. He kens weel enough that your education has been rather neglected, and that you have had few of the advantages which young ladies with your expectations usually enjoy. He feels that he has scarcely acted the part he ought to have done to his only brother's child—but the less said the sooner mended. Let by-gones be by-gones. He is anxious to make up for the past, and if you attend to your buiks and your lear, in the course of a year or two nobody will know that Miss Leslie of Inverchewan spent her earliest years in a fisherman's cottage."

"I never wished to spend it anywhere else," said Marion, with spirit; "I have been happier here than I should have been among all the grand gentlemen and ladies at the Castle. I am no fit to be a lady, and I do not wish to leave the only friends I have ever known; they have treated me as their own child, and I have been to them as a daughter."

"That you have," said John Kynoch, heartily; "Alice herself has not been a kinder, dearer daughter to both of us. It would be a sad day for us all if you had to leave us; but you must try, Marion, to find out what would be best for your happiness as well as for ours. Do what is right—what you feel to be right, and you will never have any reason to repent it."

Mr. McWyllie had listened to this conversation with mingled feelings of impatience and contempt. It was not in him to appreciate the simple, manly virtues of the fisherman, or the feelings which rendered the girl reluctant to quit the home of her infancy. He could perceive, however, that she knew the value of money as a means of indulging one of the strongest tendencies of her sex, the taste for dress; he was shrewd enough to observe that what she deemed most acceptable to others would be most acceptable to herself, and having obtained this key to her secret character, he was prepared to profit by it.

"Reason to repent it!" he repeated. "Na,

na, she will have no reason to repent it. Fortunes dinna fa' at our feet every day. We have something more to do than to stoop and pick them up. You surely would not be so selfish, John, as to persuade this young lassie to refuse the fortune which Providence has sent in her way, because you are unwilling to part with her?"

"Stop a little," said Alice, whose pale cheeks were flushed with excitement; "my father is the least selfish of men. I have a right to say so, for no one knows him better. It was not the part of a selfish man to take Marion Leslie, when her own kin turned their backs upon her, and treated her as if she had been a child of shame, and to bring her up as his own daughter. Marion knows that there has never been any distinction between us, or that, if there has been any, it has been in her favour."

"No, Alice—no," said John, laying his rough hand kindly upon her shoulder, "you must not say that. My love for you, since you sat on my knee in the long winter

evenings, after you came home from school, and read the Bible to me before Marion was ever born, has been the love we have to angels—beings far purer and better than ourselves. And I could not joke with you, Alice, as with Marion, because I could never look in that pale face of yours without thinking how soon you would be taken away from us."

"Ay," said Alice; "and I have seen you turn from me to Marion, with a look which seemed to bless God that when I was taken away, she would still be left; but that comfort will now be denied to you. Those grand people at the Castle have not the same claim on Marion as you. They cannot love her as you have loved her. They never thought of her at all till their own child died. They take her only because they cannot do otherwise. Marion will, perhaps, find, when it is too late, that kind looks and loving hearts are better than all that wealth and rank can bestow."

Marion's heart was touched by these words. She leaned her head on Alice's breast,

and wept soft, girlish tears, while she whispered—

"I will never leave you, Alice. What care I for all their wealth and grandeur?"

She was perfectly sincere, and it would have been well for her future happiness if she had consulted only the feelings of her own heart, and adhered to this, her first resolution.

"Why, here is a pretty state of affairs!" said old McWyllie, who had been witnessing this scene with intense disgust. "I come here to announce that this young girl has fallen heir to a fortune. Most people would have jumped out o' their skins with joy, but here she is whimpering and greetin', as if some piece of ill-luck had befallen her. But she may cheer up—the lands of Inverchewan need na gang a-begging. If ane winna, another will; I have made my offer, so now I maun e'en gang back as I came, and tell the auld laird that he may look for another heir. Never fear, he will not have to go far to find one."

"Could Marion not remain with us as

before," said John, "without losing her rights?"

"I put it to yourself, John, as a sensible man, whether this house of yours be a becoming residence for a lady of fortune, or your family the best school for training her for the duties that will devolve upon her in after-life? I can understand that you are sorry to part with her; but that sorrow becomes selfishness when it stands in the way of her future happiness."

"It shall never be said that I have marred her happiness, but I will never close my door on one who has been taught to love me as her father. This house is her home as long as she chooses to occupy it; and if she should leave it, the door will always be open to welcome her return."

"It is only right and fair that you should be paid for the trouble and expense of her upbringing; and if you will mention any sum in reason—I will give you a cheque on Mr. Leslie's banker for the amount."

With a consequential air, the lawyer drew his cheque-book from an inner pocket,

and prepared to write. His movements were arrested, however, by the fisherman grasping his arm with such force that the pen dropped from his fingers, and even the rapid gyrations of his head were, for the moment, suspended. He looked up in his face with an air of helpless surprise, and began to suspect that John had lost his reason.

For a moment or two the feelings of the fisherman were too powerful to find utterance. He felt insulted and degraded by the offer of money, for services such as money can neither procure nor repay. He felt that his character and motives were misunderstood, and his feelings wantonly trampled on and injured. If Mr. McWyllie had been a younger man, he might have been guilty of some rash act of violence; but the sight of the old man, trembling and helpless in his grasp, disarmed him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. McWyllie—I forgot myself. You have misunderstood my character, but it is no matter."

"No matter," said Mr. McWyllie, indig-

nantly, rubbing the injured part of his body; "the spider may say to the fly, it is no matter, when he crunches every bone in his body as you have nearly crunched mine—but the fly may be of a different opinion. But I'll bring an action against you for battery and assault. I'll make it a civil action, and have you up before the Lord Ordinary. I'll get roarin' damages, and then I'll sell you out roup and stoup, as I have done many a better fellow."

"You may do as you like," said John, haughtily. "I am sorry that I laid my hand roughly on an old man like you; I have said so already, and I say it again. I am not afraid of anything you can do to me, but there is no reason why there should be bad blood between us. Give me your hand, in token that you forgive my violence, but never speak again about money as you did just now."

Mr. McWyllie felt that he had made a mistake. His professional duties had made him familiar only with the darker and less pleasing shades of human character, and he

would have scoffed at the idea of a fisherman possessing that delicacy of feeling which he had seldom found even among his more opulent clients. It would be quite a mistake to suppose that he respected John Kynoch for being more scrupulous than others; far from it, he despised him as a fool, who, from mistaken feelings of false pride, rejected money to which he was fairly entitled. He felt, however, that it would not be judicious to allude further to the subject at present, and that it would be better to leave them some time to think over the proposal which he had made.

"Well, John, I suppose I must forgive you, but my arm feels as if it had been in a vice. Take care, John, take care, or you may get into trouble. If it had been my throat instead of my arm, you might have choked me, and then you would have had to chew hemp. Talking is dry work, so I'll just wet my mouth with a thimbleful of whisky, in token that I wish you well. Think over the offer I have made, and I'll call back after a couple of days to get your answer."

With these words Mr. McWyllie took his leave. The Partan had gone to refresh himself at the village public-house, and Donald, profiting by his absence, had contrived to overturn the gig in a ditch, in the attempt to reach the grass which grew on its sides. This state of matters did not tend to improve Mr. McWyllie's temper; if the truth must be told, he swore fearfully, and made the journey home so generally unpleasant, both to Donald and the Partan, that the latter confided to his fellow-servants his belief that his master had nearly reached the end of his tether, and that the devil had been giving him some premonitory hints that morning that the conditions of their bargain must now be fulfilled.

Meanwhile there was sorrow, and sadness, and discomfort in the cottage of Stormy Jack. When the evening chapter was read, he knelt down and prayed, with heartfelt contrition, that the sins of that day might be forgiven, and that they might all have strength for the discharge of every duty, however painful. Those who knelt with

him felt that he was alluding to his violence to McWyllie, and that he was already convinced that it was his duty, however painful the sacrifice might be, to give Marion up to those who claimed her.

CHAPTER XV.

It might have been expected that Marion herself would have been the last to consent to such an arrangement. She was bound by every tie of gratitude and affection to the friends of her childhood, and all her associations were connected with the home which she was now about to leave. If she had been really attached to Ninian, she might have preferred her humble lot, for a time, to the greatness which was about to be thrust upon her, but her feeling towards him did not amount to more than girlish preference. He did not weigh for much in balancing the causes which were to decide her resolution, nor did his presence fill up the foreground in her pictures of future happiness. If nothing had occurred to disturb the smooth monotony of their every-day existence, she might have come, in course of time, to love him. She could not fail to

mark his superiority to all the young men of the village; and the tender manliness of his character had, in some measure, touched her heart. But she did not love him with that love which finds its complement in the entire negation of self, and which rejoices in sacrifice and suffering for the sake of its object. Marion did not deserve the name of a heroine; she had few heroic features in her character, and her suddenly formed resolution to cleave to the friends of her youth soon began to give way.

She had all that thirst for novelty, and change of scene and pleasure which characterises our early youth, when the path of life seems strewn with roses, and fresh flowers seem to spring up beneath our tread. She loved the honest fisherman and his family with sincere affection, but she longed to go forth into that great world which was to her so mysterious, and yet so attractive. Hitherto she had been happy enough in Loanhead, but a different path in life was now open to her; would it be right to refuse the position which was now within her reach? It would be a position

of influence, and it might be made one of usefulness; she would be able to prove her gratitude to the Kynoch family for all their kindness, and Ninian, yes, Ninian, should not be forgotten; he was always poring over his books at every spare moment, and his taste for learning should be gratified, he should have the education of a gentleman. And, then, had she not been a burden long enough upon these kind friends? Would it be right for her, in their altered circumstances, to remain any longer dependent upon their charity, when it was in her power to place them beyond the reach of want? It was a painful sacrifice—her motives might be misunderstood, but her future life should justify her choice, and prove that she had chosen less for herself than for them.

While these thoughts occupied the most prominent place in her mind, as faithful historians, we must add, that there were dim and indistinct, but delicious, anticipations of the pleasures of dress, equipage, and the other sensuous belongings of human greatness. Marion would have been more

or less than a woman if she had been altogether beyond the influence of their magic spell, but she sincerely believed that they did not sway her much in forming her decision. Perhaps they swayed her more than she was really conscious of; but there are no sophists so specious as our passions—when our hearts are once bent upon a thing, we can always find a thousand reasons to justify our choice. We are not all so candid as Sampson, who, in choosing a Philistine wife, assigned as his only reason, "She pleaseth me well;" if the Jewish champion had lived in modern times, he would have said nothing of his own pleasure, but dwelt strongly on the advantages of such a marriage in cementing the union between the two nations. Of course our self-knowledge keeps pace with our modern civilization, and we pity the strong but stupid man who married a woman only because she pleased him well.

John and Alice Kynoch divined Marion's choice before she had expressed it. Love is jealous in such cases, and can read the heart through the face. They did nothing

to alter her resolve; they felt that she had reached the turning-point of existence, where she must choose her own path, and bear the burden of her life's responsibility. They had nothing but the treasure of their own love to offer her; they could not blame her if the world's treasures, now within her reach, proved more attractive. There was sorrow in Stormy Jack's heart, but there was no bitterness.

"I see how it is, but we must not complain," were his only words to Alice, when alone with her in the evening. "Marion is going to leave us. It seems natural that she should, she is different from us. Do you no mind, Alice, how I once brought home a young kittywaick,* which had fallen from the nest? It was content enough to walk about with the hen and the chickens till its wings grew, and then, one fine morning, it was off to sea, flapping its wings and screaming with delight, like a happy kittywaick as it was. The hen gave a cackle of surprise, but she had other young ones to scrape for, so she did not break her heart

* A gull.

about it. You know what I mean, Alice?"

"I am glad you take it so, father. I thought that Marion would have been the stay of your old age, but it has been otherwise ordered."

That same night, after evening prayer, when Marion and Alice were alone, the former opened up her heart to the sister of her affections. Alice folded her gently in her arms, and heard all that the weeping girl had to say; when she had concluded, she kissed her tenderly, and said,

"Well, Marion, I hope you will never have reason to repent your choice."

Those words haunted Marion in after-life; when the dark shadows of sorrow had closed around her, they came back again and again like the wail of a dirge. There are certain words engraven on the tablets of our memories with a pen of iron, which the corroding influence of time cannot wear out; they may have been spoken lightly, and lightly thought of at the moment, but they come afterwards to be invested with a mystical character, as pregnant with our future fate. Marion had reason in after-

life, bitter reason, to repent her choice; and she believed to the last that, when Alice spoke these words, her heart of love had a presentiment of the evil which awaited her.

It is painful to part with a stranger whom we have found a pleasant *compagnon de voyage* on a steamboat or in a railway carriage; what then must be the feelings of a father on sending forth a beloved child for ever from the home of her infancy?

In a week after Mr. McWyllie's first visit, the gossips of Loanhead found matter to feed their curiosity by observing the carriage with the Leslie livery and arms drive down the main street of the village, and stop at the door of Stormy Jack's cottage We hurry over the parting scene. Marion was at length placed in the carriage, which drove off. The stream of their lives was divided, and flowed for the future in different directions.

END OF VOL I.

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